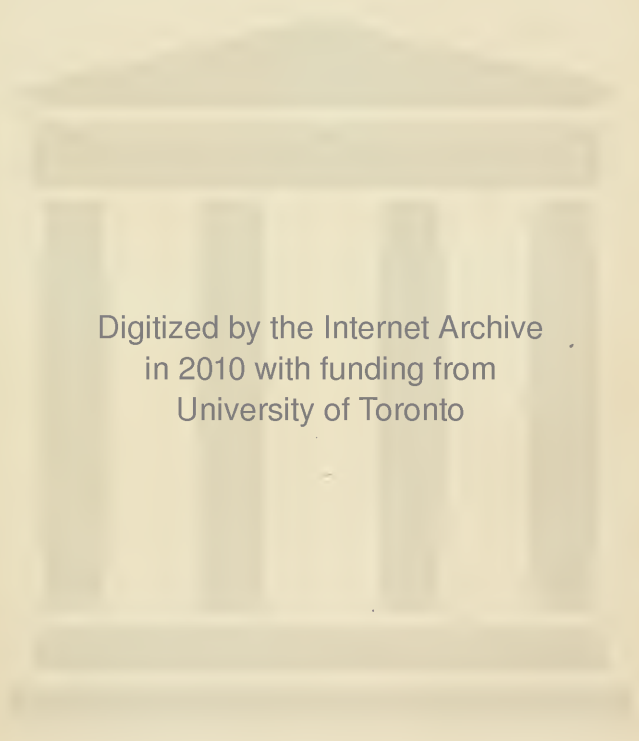




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COLLEGE SERMONS



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COLLEGE SERMONS

BY THE LATE,

BENJAMIN JOWETT, M.A.

MASTER OF BALLIOL COLLEGE

EDITED BY THE VERY REV. THE HON.,

W. H. FREMANTLE, M.A.

DEAN OF RIPON

THIRD EDITION

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PREFACE

THE first two Sermons printed in this volume belong to a different period from the rest, and may be said to represent an 'earlier manner.' Mr. Jowett was at that time a young tutor whose views were not fully formed, but whose fresh and keen interest in his pupils was already the same which distinguished him to the end.

It was at that time the custom at Balliol College that the Holy Communion was celebrated only once in the middle of each term; and on the Saturday evening preceding this each tutor gathered his own pupils into his room and delivered to them an address in preparation for the Sacrament. Mr. Jowett's addresses on these occasions were highly valued by the more thoughtful of his pupils, and it seems desirable to give specimens of them.

He preached comparatively seldom before he became Master. He was Select Preacher before the University in the years 1851-2; but none of

the Sermons of that time are included in the present volume. They belong not to the College Sermons, but to those dealing with more general interests. A specimen of his University Sermons will, however, be found in Sermon V.

He declined the office of Catechetical Lecturer which then existed in the College, as too technical; and, since there were no sermons in the College chapel, he preached hardly at all in Oxford, and only on rare occasions for his friends in London and other places. But in the year 1869 having been requested by the College to preach to the undergraduates, he commenced the series of Sermons from which most of those now published are taken.

On becoming Master, in 1870, he made it a rule to preach regularly twice in the term, on the first and fifth Sunday; and he continued this practice, with but rare exceptions, to the end. He also preached more frequently in other places, and, from the year 1866, on the invitation of Dr. Stanley, Dean of Westminster, and of his successor, Dr. Bradley, he addressed the large evening congregation regularly once a year in the Abbey. Many of his sermons were preached both at Oxford and in London; nor did he hesitate to repeat the same

sermon again and again in the College with a few years' interval.

The Sacramental Lectures naturally deal more directly with the spiritual life. In some of the College Sermons prudential advice becomes more prominent. But the unswerving faith which saw in the life and Spirit of Christ the true representation of the nature of God was always present. One of those who has published his reminiscences of the Master recalls the impression made on him when, after half-an-hour's reflexions on common experiences, which seemed about to close with little to raise men above the world, the preacher stopped short, and closed his sermon with these words: 'If you ask me for an ideal, an example, a standard; if you say, "What, then, is the higher life?" I will tell you. It is "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."'

His method, though sometimes varied, is to hover for a time round the main subject of the sermon, giving some general exposition of the text or of topics bearing upon it, and then to fasten definitely upon the special point which he desires to enforce, and to spend his whole strength in illustrating and enforcing it.

His theory of preaching was not to read largely,

or to go through a long elaboration of thought for the special occasion, but to take some subject which he had already worked out both in thought and in experience, and to write it as the direct product of his mind and heart. But he was extremely careful, even fastidious, in the expression of his thoughts; and in this, as in every part of his work, he gave himself incredible pains, as is evidenced by the alterations, erasures, and additions in the manuscript. Even the revising of an old sermon cost him much. His sense of the importance of care and trouble in such matters made him unwilling to publish; and when, in the last two years of his life, in response to the request of his old pupils in 1892¹, he set to work to go over his sermons for publication, he was often driven to rewrite with great difficulty. In one case he makes the following note: 'This is the eighth time I have tried to rewrite this sermon and have failed.'

The earlier sermons are written in a clear and flowing hand, on broad quarto sheets, while the later sermons are in a more crabbed hand, and written on sheets of note paper held loosely together by a string, perhaps as more portable.

It is not always easy to decipher the meaning.

¹ See this Address, and the Master's reply, at pp. x, xi.

In a very few cases, where the sentences are evidently unfinished, it has been necessary to add one or two words; but mere roughness of expression it has not been attempted to remove.

The language is as direct and simple as possible. Where a plain, short word will serve to express his thought it is always used. His only rhetoric lies in taking the shortest way possible to reach the understanding and the heart. Sometimes by argument, sometimes by forcible statements, by epigram, by homely or humorous touches, sometimes by a parable, he wins his way.

His delivery in early days was very easy and fluent: in the later years there was more sense of effort. But the peculiar charm or force was always the same. It came from the character and the reputation which was at the back of the words; from the consciousness that each sentence expressed a genuine and original conviction; that he had dared and suffered for the right to speak out his unfettered opinion; and that each year made the success of his methods of training and influencing character more apparent. Young and old alike felt that he had taken pains to understand them and the world in which they moved, and had succeeded.

It has been thought best in this volume to include only sermons preached in the College. There are many which record the biography of eminent men, whether of the past or the present generation, and which deal with theological or more general questions. Specimens of each of these classes are given in the present volume; but the mass of them are reserved for a future occasion. The volume closes with the Message addressed to the College in 1891, when he was lying between life and death.

The following is the text of the address alluded to on p. viii, and the Master's reply:—

To the Rev. The Master of Balliol.

February, 1892.

DEAR MASTER,

Many of your old pupils at Balliol College have long felt a desire to possess a permanent record of the religious teaching which we have heard from you in the College Chapel and elsewhere, and we know that the desire is shared by many others whose names do not appear here. May we express to you our conviction that a collection of your Sermons would

be welcomed by very many old friends and pupils, whose strong wishes we think will not be altogether indifferent to you. Some of the words which we have heard from you in Balliol Chapel, in the University Church, and in Westminster Abbey, will always stand out in our memory, and we believe that they would bring to many besides ourselves the same guidance and encouragement that your own pupils have drawn from them. It is for these reasons that we venture to hope that you will permit us to arrange, without trouble or expense to yourself, for a printed volume of your sermons, for private or public circulation as you may indicate. We find it difficult to say fitly all that we feel on the matter, but whether you are able to comply with our wishes or not, you will allow us to take this opportunity of expressing to you our deep gratitude for all that we owe to your teaching.

[SIGNED BY 108 GRADUATE MEMBERS OF BALLIOL.]

BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD,

March 2, 1892.

DEAR MR. GELL,

I am greatly honoured by the request of my old pupils, which you have been good enough to convey to me, that I should publish some of my sermons. I am sorry that I cannot, at present,

comply with this wish. The reason is, that I think them ill-suited for publication. There is a difference between a sermon which is approved by a partial audience, under the impression of the moment, and one which can stand the test of being carefully read over at leisure. These sermons were hastily written, owing to the pressure of other work, and perhaps also from a bad habit of procrastination in the writer. They are very rough and unconnected; and most of them, being written a long time since, would appear to be out of date. What may have been suitable ten or twenty years ago, when addressed to a small audience, would not be appropriate at the present time. The truths of Theology are supposed to be eternal, but the fashions of Theological opinion change from year to year. There is a more important reason. 'The highest truths,' as Plato says, 'demand of us the greatest accuracy'; and I should not feel justified in offering my thoughts on such subjects to the world at large, unless I had striven to give them the best form in which I was capable of finding expression for them.

But I still hope that within a reasonable time, if health and life are continued to me, I may be able to publish one or two volumes of Sermons and Essays on subjects which may perhaps have an interest to my former pupils. My sense of their great affection for me is always accompanied by the feeling of how little I have ever been able to do for them. I should wish, above all things, to dedicate the few remaining

years of my life to their service. I shall consider myself bound by the pledge which I have given, and shall be greatly encouraged in the work, which I undertake at their request, by the knowledge that it will be kindly received by them.

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,

B. JOWETT.

P. LYTTTELTON GELL, ESQ.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SERMON	PAGE
✓ I. <i>Eccles.</i> xii. 1. Youth and religion . . . (May 18, 1850)	1
II. <i>Mark</i> ix. 24. Difficulties of faith and their solution (1852 or 1853)	11
✓ III. <i>Ps.</i> cxxii. 3. An introduction to Oxford . (Oct., 1885)	26
IV. <i>Ps.</i> cxxvii. 1. The building up of the College (Oct., 1870)	41
V. <i>Luke</i> xviii. 8. The prospects of Christianity (Nov. 26, 1871)	59
VI. <i>Exod.</i> xiv. 13. Grounds of hopefulness . (Nov. 10, 1878)	80
✗ VII. <i>John</i> vi. 63. The slow but sure working of the Christian spirit . . . (May 26, 1878)	102
✓ VIII. <i>Eccles.</i> xi. 9, 10. The joys and aspirations of youth (Feb. 5, 1882)	127
✓ IX. <i>Rom.</i> xii. 15, 16. Sympathy . . . (Jan., 1879)	148
X. <i>Rom.</i> xiii. 8. The husbanding and use of money (Oct. 14, 1877)	163

SERMON	PAGE
XI. <i>Eccles.</i> xii. 12, 13. Study (<i>Jan.</i> , 1885)	183
XII. <i>Luke</i> iv. 4. Conversation (<i>April</i> 20, 1879)	202
XIII. I <i>Cor.</i> x. 31. Eating and drinking (<i>April</i> 19, 1885)	225
XIV. <i>Eccles.</i> ix. 11, <i>Matt.</i> xx. 16. Success and failure (<i>Oct.</i> 12, 1879)	244
XV. <i>Heb.</i> xi. 4. In Memoriam—Lewis Nettleship (<i>Oct.</i> 16, 1892)	264
XVI. <i>Luke</i> iv. 18. Going to church (1875)	277
XVII. I <i>John</i> iii. 20. God's judgement of us and our own (about 1868)	295
XVIII. <i>Acts</i> x. 38. The life of Jesus Christ (<i>Oct.</i> , 1888)	309
XIX. <i>John</i> xix. 30. The completion of a life's work (<i>May</i> 14, 1882)	326
XX. Message to the College, in illness (<i>Oct.</i> 18, 1891)	347

COLLEGE SERMONS

I

*¹ REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS
OF THY YOUTH.*

ECCLES. xii. 1.

EVERY serious person must feel a strange contrast between the gaiety and lightheartedness of youth and the opportunities and responsibilities of this (however paradoxical it may sound) the most solemn period of our lives; the seedtime and springtime of all the rest, in which the future is almost irrevocably settled, in which, if we were wise and would understand this, it might be settled for our eternal good. Youth has a great secret which is never known until it is too late to use, a treasure which is ever growing old, as being laid up in earthen vessels and crumbling into the earth from whence it came. The heart of young men, one would have thought, should leap within them at the feeling that the future is still theirs, that whatever they do day by day is not a toilsome service to receive its penny a day, but shall bring forth fruit

¹ An early address in preparation for the Sacrament, probably about 1850.

abundantly, turning their life from a waste into a fairly cultivated field on which the sun shines and the rains descend, and it brings forth an hundred-fold, for it was sown in due season.

Perhaps if we were able to carry about with us the consciousness of all this, to think day by day of the awful responsibilities in the midst of which we stand, youth itself might wither and cease to be what it is, and fade away oppressed by the realities of life. We cannot say how this might be, but it is no reason against turning our minds to these things. It is not possible that in youth we can have the experience or seriousness of advancing life. In youth and age we seem destined to a different sort of probation: in the first the web of our existence is not yet woven; we can correct our faults and unravel the tissue, but we want experience, not exactly of what is our duty, but of how to do our duty, how to form that character which is still in our own power: in the second we know our duty, but can no longer do it equally. Increasing knowledge and experience cast a sorrowful light on former errors, but scarcely give us the hope of amending.

The great poet has drawn a picture of the several ages of man. Let us endeavour, as far as we can, to trace our future course, to imagine to ourselves what life will be—its various stages, its half-way houses at which we pause and begin the journey anew—not as a matter of curious speculation, but to see if by

looking forward into the future we can gain any knowledge of what it is likely to be to ourselves ; let us listen to the accounts of travellers who have gone before, that that new country into which we are all passing may not be an unexplored land, that we may not desire to return, which is impossible, to provide our journey better, but go on to the end in hope and peace.

Of the future we hardly know anything else, but that it will be unlike the present. We ourselves shall change with it ; if any one here is living half a century hence it will be in a changed world. How changed that inner world of thoughts and feelings, when at the best resignation will have taken the place of life and hope, and the scene in which he lives be folding up before him like a vesture, and whether in hope or faith or despair he will himself begin to feel that he has nothing more to do with these things. And how all his family relations may have changed, I need hardly mention, and how the course of the great world itself, with its struggles for empire, and prejudices and passions may have changed, in which each one here present is as nothing and insignificant, I may say, except in the sight of God only. Of what we ourselves shall be fifty years hence we can scarcely form a more distinct idea than of what another will be, so dimly can we see through the clouds which cover us.

We know or may know what we are, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be. Let us think of another period of life much nearer to us, of which most of us have thought and schemed, say ten years hence, when nearly all of us will have left this place and be settled in our various callings and spheres. It may be, and indeed is, according to merely human probability, very unlikely that all those whom we have known here, all those who will be present to-morrow morning at the Lord's table, will then be living. Who will be called away we cannot tell. The last are first and the first last here as in so many other dispensations of God's providence. One of the most interesting questions we can ask about this time of which I am speaking, if we shall be then alive, is how we shall look back upon the present. A great change will certainly have come over us by that time. If any of us have been careless, or thoughtless, or immoral here, it is likely enough that we shall be sobered by increasing years, that we shall no longer care for the follies of our youth, and to outward appearance shall become better in the natural course of things. And yet it is great doubt whether we shall be really better. No one can pretend to cast up his account with God, and say how much in his life and conduct is the result of circumstances, how much was the sincere working of an earnest will and penitent heart: we had better leave these sort of calcu-

lations. But common sense teaches us that we cannot set much by a change which is produced by our altered condition only, by the flow of spirits ceasing, by our health failing, or anything of this sort. And there is another and more painful side to the picture. Any one who observes himself will probably find many respects in which sin gains upon him: the sins of middle age take the place gradually of the sins of youth. We must remember that increased knowledge of the world is, more than any other kind of knowledge, a knowledge of good and evil, that as we know men better we get to care more for the opinions of men; as we become sensible of the real importance of money and the outward advantages of life, we become more prudent and careful and selfish, until the frankness and generosity of youth is lost. I do not mean to say that it is necessarily the case—only as years grow upon us we must be careful and guard against this; there is no knowing how early these, the sins of middle age, may creep over us, and narrow our hearts and intellects, while the practice and advice of all the world tends to drag us down to its level. Some of us may perhaps be thinking of how we can order our lives to the glory of God and the good of our fellow-creatures; our purpose may be ill-weighted, our abilities insufficient; we may not know what a great thing it is to sell all and follow Christ. But better a thousand times the romantic dream of such a purpose, than the thousand schemes

of worldly interest which crowd upon men in after years, when life has become practical, and they are eaten up with selfish care. He who said 'sell all that thou hast,' still speaks to us from heaven; He who took a little child and set him in the midst to show men the way to heaven, will acknowledge these efforts to serve Him, inconsistent and wayward though they be.

To come back to the question of which I spoke before, let us ask how we shall look back upon the time spent here. Shall we feel that here were laid the foundations upon which we built in after life? our three years here, were they usefully spent or not? Did they give us those fixed and regular modes of thinking and acting, without which life is dissipated and worthless? Shall we remember with pleasure that there were many who helped us to do rightly, that such an one perhaps gave us a sense of duty and religion which we never had before, that we in our turn did what in us lay, by example and kindness, to do good to others? or shall we have no recollection save of its follies and vanities, of useless expenses, weakness in yielding to the opinion of others, of a love of the rank or style in which others lived, of vanity in all its forms, and many other things as well, which it is impossible in after years we can think of without some humiliation? And shall we be able to perceive that our life since then has been growing in the right way—that there it might have been re-

marked of us that we had something of character, that is to say, an independent way of thinking and speaking and acting, which was our own and no one's else, and that this by the grace of God has been ripening into the fullness of the stature of Christ? Or, if we are able for a moment to reflect upon ourselves, shall we perceive that we never had any character, but were entirely given up to the opinions and ways of others, and that this fatal curse has followed us through life and been the source of all our evils?

The loss of the opportunities which this place affords is so trite a theme that I will not say much about it. Let us throw aside University distinctions, the prospects which this place opens to some of us, as a thing indifferent. Let me ask you only, if you ever come hereafter to think seriously about life, what it will be to feel that you have neither the knowledge nor the means of acquiring it necessary for your place and station, that you are ministers perhaps of the gospel and feel impatient of that degree of application which is absolutely necessary to understand the word of God, that all you can hope to be to those under your care is the kind neighbour and friend, but hardly the teacher, if you have never learnt yourself. To understand thoroughly any of the more difficult parts of Scripture requires far more knowledge and ability than to unlock the treasures of ancient philosophy or solve the problems of nature. It is not the study of a day or of a year, but is and

ought to be to every one, especially to the clergyman, the study of our whole life. But how can those of us who have never learnt to study at all, learn to study Scripture, who have never gained even the ordinary power of fixing the attention, who have never known what it was to labour day after day at the same subject. To such the study of Scripture becomes helpless and hopeless; if they are religious men they read it again and again, but only find there what they believed before. Here is the word of life—we call it so and think it so—and yet how strange that we never cared to acquire the power of understanding it, of so methodizing and arranging our thoughts that we may have the power of explaining it to others. There is a way of speaking by which the importance of these things may be frittered away and made to appear trifling. ‘What is such an one the better for much knowledge?’ or ‘Men are pretty much like one another,’ are forms by which all these things are depreciated, and enthusiasm is repressed, and virtue and learning thrown into the shade. But enthusiasm is natural to us in youth; to bring down the cares of life to what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and what we shall put on, or, what is the same thing, to worldly honours and riches and enjoyments, is strange and distasteful to any one not yet hardened by the world. Let us feel assured and strengthen the conviction in ourselves and others that these our first instincts about things are the right

ones. Let us hope that something of that blessing which Christ promised to little children still lingers about us, if we have kept ourselves unspotted by the world.

Remember now thy Creator. Why especially in the days of youth? Because then we have the power to do it; our knowledge of God afterwards is ever tending to be of a different kind—a knowledge without love—in which our reason seems to go beyond our feelings, which does not interweave itself in our nature, and is certainly not, to the same degree, capable of moulding us to His will. Which of us in after-life by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? One would scarcely venture to say so much as this of our moral growth, and yet it is true also here that we cannot invert the natural order of things. There is a time to serve God as a little child, and a time to serve Him with the understanding also; and a time to repent, and a time in which repentance has become very difficult, and a time in which it has become almost impossible. And now is the time to repent with us; if it would please Him to touch us with His Holy Spirit, we are, as it has been said of St. Paul, fusile under His hand, all our gifts and faculties, our outward means, might be brought into obedience, into one harmonious service to His will. In a few years this will not, cannot be so. We shall no more be able to make a free offering of our hearts to Him. We shall bring Him the waste of our power,

the wreck of our lives. The world will have caught us in its toils; those natural gifts which seem in themselves not far from the kingdom of heaven will have passed away and been lost to us; the goods of this life will place themselves between us and heaven. If we ever looked upwards with any earnest thought or wish, if we ever remember in past times to have felt assured of a blessedness on those who believed, let us hold fast this thought, let us recall this image, because the time of promise is short and the evil days will soon come.

II

¹ *LORD, I BELIEVE; HELP THOU MINE UNBELIEF.*

MARK ix. 24.

A CERTAIN man had a son, who is described in the language of Scripture as having a dumb spirit, which at times made him fierce and violent, and, as we should say, threw him into convulsions and grievously tormented him. Whether the power exercised on him was one altogether different from what we see around us at the present day, or whether it was the same power in a different country and another state of society (where too the opinions of men were so different), manifesting itself in a different way, is a question on which we need not now enter. It was a sad sight to see the poor young man, bereft of speech and of reason, lying on the ground and subject as it were to supernatural torture. It was a sad calamity to the family to which he belonged, to whom he was bound by the ties of natural affection—a calamity than which, it may be truly said, there could hardly be a greater either now or then. His father brought him to Christ to beseech Him to

¹ An address before Communion, given in 1852 or 1853.

heal him. Many long years he had been tried by the affliction of his son. He was told that if he could believe all things were possible to him that believeth. And the answer that he made was, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief': knowing little, having hardly any conception of whom he was to believe on. He is described in the Gospel almost as extorting from Christ his request by the vehemence of his passion, in a manner that reminds us of the parable in which God is compared to an unjust judge who, if we ask often enough and loud enough and vehemently enough, will hear and answer our requests.

'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief,' is a prayer that we have occasion to use very often, perhaps oftener than the first disciples. For 'since the fathers have fallen asleep and all things remain as they were from the beginning,' and the course of the world has returned to what it was, and business occupies us or the pursuit of knowledge engrosses us, and life is a sort of routine, we are in more danger of forgetting those truths which quickened faith at first and made all earthly things trivial and unimportant, and worked a revolution in the hearts of men and undermined the world itself. Lord, I believe still; but the objects of belief are afar off, separated from us by the distance of eighteen hundred years, and the candle in the Lord's house is waxing dim, and the way into the most holy place

not yet made manifest. Lord, I believe still, though no wonders are wrought before mine eyes, though men are no longer converted by thousands as at the preaching of Paul, though the evil of the human heart and the frailty of the human intellect has incrustated itself on the Gospel. Lord, I believe still, though science seems to close me in on every side and forbids me to pierce that veil of flesh with which I am encompassed, or to draw aside the curtain of the natural world that conceals from me the eye of the Almighty. Lord, I believe still, though in this world there be faint vestiges of Thy presence, in the dwellings of business or fashion, amid the haunts of misery and ignorance, where no light of Thy truth ever comes, no Christian love ever warms or cheers the hearts of men. Lord, I believe, though the country in which I live seems at times to wear so little the aspect of a Christian land, though the persons among whom I live fall so far short of their profession; yea, and my own self also can give no rational account to myself why I seem to believe and yet allow belief to have so little influence on my heart and conduct.

Such are some of the difficulties which from without and within us seem to assail our belief in religion. Many of these are what may be termed the real difficulties of religion, which will never be solved on this side of the grave, but are a part of the mystery in which it has pleased God to involve human life.

But there are other difficulties which may be termed the unreal difficulties of religion, which hardly need a solution. Our faith is stronger at one time or another—we are elated or depressed by sickness and disappointment or the reverse. Sometimes, in a manner we cannot account for from our natural temperament merely, we have a clearer view of the truths of revelation than at others. And it is a great matter to place our faith above these doubts or these accidents, to stand upon a rock which neither the winds of opinion nor the waves of human life and action can overturn, to be so knit into and made one with that rock that while it stands we stand and can be no more separated than the rock itself torn from its eternal base. I need not tell you that that rock is Christ. But without further dwelling on this I purpose to consider in what remains of this sermon (1) what are the most frequent causes of unbelief, and (2) what are the remedies which nature or grace points out for the cure of a soul thus sadly diseased.

(1) Unbelief may be divided generally into unbelief of two kinds, unbelief of the head and unbelief of the heart. There are some persons who have doubts respecting facts recorded in Scripture, or are unable to realize to themselves a future life, or fail to see the mark of divine authority in the person of Christ our Saviour. Sometimes they have a definite form of belief or doctrine different from the truth which we

have been taught, sometimes they go from one system to another seeking rest and finding none. These last are commonly called sceptics. Do not let us imagine that there is a yawning gulf or abyss of unbelief ready to open upon us in these latter days. That is a way in which people alarm and excite themselves, just as other people terrify their imaginations by applying the prophecies to the times in which they live and the coming struggle among the nations of the earth. There are not many such persons, but yet there are such: if we ever cross them in the path of life we shall be surprised to find them leading in many cases correct and moral lives. And the question we then have to consider is, how we shall meet the doubts which they fling in our way or in that of others and the attempts they make to undermine our faith in the truth of Christ. No man will lightly rush into such a controversy as into an argument about politics for the sake of victory or display: the interests concerned are too weighty for that; nor will he meet his opponent with jests and sneers and uncharitable speeches: we cannot argue a man into a religion of love with words of party spirit or hatred. The chief argument must be a holy and meek life, and the chief weapon at the time a serious temper of mind, such as expresses our conviction of the truth of the things which we are saying. Too often where a man's vanity will not allow us to refute his arguments, where the mere narrowness of his mind prevents his comprehending

the length and breadth and height of the love of God, or where our own feeble powers or want of learning may prevent our doing justice to the same, we may draw him to us by the cords of sympathy, we may make him feel that we have something (if indeed we have it) that he has not, something that he would fain have and that human nature itself seems to long for, that he sees to be the support of others on the bed of sickness and in the grave and gate of death. We may draw him from disputes about the facts of Christianity to feel its spirit and power, to live the life of Christ when he is uncertain about the narrative of his life, to pass from vain philosophy and knowledge falsely so called until he is not far from the kingdom of heaven. We can imagine such a person harassed by doubts and difficulties, yet by the grace of God so growing in the practice of the Christian faith that he almost becomes a partaker of the blessing on those who have not seen and yet have believed.

The case of the sceptic, which has just been considered, is not a common one, at least where men have had a Christian education and lived in a Christian country. There are such persons, however, in all the various ranks of society, some endeavouring to scale the heights of philosophy, others laying it down as a principle that this life is to be preferred to another, others led away by an uneasy temper of mind and by the help of a little learning able to doubt what

other men believe. For it is quite true, as has been said, that a little philosophy takes a man from God but a great deal brings him back again. If a man has studied himself out of religion he must study himself into it again. But most of us have not time for study, at least in after life: the inquiry into the first principles of things is a mere name and shadow to us, and the greatest of men have allowed how feeble were their own powers of comprehension, how little they could assert authoritatively beyond what was necessary for daily life. What we can do, what is very near to us, is to live the life of Christ. And this leads us to consider the subject in another way, not as we may seem to stand on a vantage-ground and fight a battle with an imaginary opponent, but as we ourselves may become the opponents with ourselves of the truth that is in Christ—when like Peter we begin to sink, walking upon the sea of life, and need the outstretched hand of the Lord to save us from perishing. Even the Apostle Paul himself found that dark clouds of doubt passed over his mind: his Sun was not always shining: without were fightings, within were fears—and at times the world and all it contained seemed to be in the power of the evil, as at other times ready to burst forth with the revelation of the sons of God.

Confining ourselves then to the influence of doubt and unbelief on our own minds, let us endeavour to trace its causes and their remedies, not as a matter of curious speculation, but as one of deep and near

interest to us, in reference to which we may do much for ourselves by self-discipline and what has been termed 'the law of a holy life.' Sometimes doubts arise from our coming across a more powerful and vigorous mind than our own, or from reading some book that gets a peculiar hold on our sympathies and tastes, or from one part of our faith being shaken and seeming to involve all, or even as a reaction against the overstrictness of a religious education. It is a great thing if we can hold our head above these difficulties and steer our way through them, not by the help of genius or of learning or criticism, but by that of common sense. Somehow or other they seem to affect men very differently: one man brushes them aside like cobwebs and goes on his way rejoicing to do God service, 'like a giant to run his course,' while another man is talking about them all his life long and seems to find in them an aliment for the natural unhealthiness of his mind. For, after all, doubt is not some great exertion of the mind, but mere weakness, which like some diseases affects us more at one time of life than another; and we may hope to live through it like other disorders. And it is a disorder in which every man must minister to himself, not without the hope that Christ who took upon Him our infirmities will take this also. No man, it has been said, has more doubts than he can carry: nature herself forbids the mind to remain for ever in a state of unrest. And it is in a manner certain, as

we may see by experience, that, if we doubt when we are young, those doubts will pass away in mature life. Even the heathen philosopher Plato said, 'My son, many have ere now doubted of the existence of the gods, but no man ever passed from youth to age without at some time or other believing.'

The waywardness then of these impressions of doubt is of itself their own best solution. They trouble us for a while and then pass away as a dream when one awaketh. How can any rational man attach much weight to that which appears to him different at different times, which is affected by his health or spirits, or even by the disappointments or other circumstances of his life? But there may be cases in which doubts may have had a deeper hold, and cut down, if I may use such an expression, into our life and character. These cases are chiefly two. First, where the mind is already unsettled, and from its own unhappy state has a natural love for doubt as for any other excitement of the intellect; or where from defective previous education it is altogether unable to take the measure of things or form a judgment respecting them, and yet is destitute of any fixed habit of life and conduct which may prevent its being the prey of every passing thought. Ill-regulated minds are, to use the words of the Epistle, 'clouds without water,' passing ever to and fro upon the earth, and never descending in genial showers to fertilise its bosom. And there are other peculiarities

of temperament, such as vanity, restlessness, intellectual ambition, which indulge in doubt as the key to all knowledge, and on these it may have an unhealthy and more than passing influence. The only way to cure such disorders is to be aware of them, to place ourselves above them, to despise ourselves for them, not to attribute to zeal for knowledge what really arises from some lesser motive—to perceive that they are our weakness and not our strength.

I am not saying a word against the honest truthful inquiry, even into the first principles of faith, for those who have time and learning and an understanding capable of it. Such inquiries, if men give their whole heart and life to them, not without prayer, may be a blessing to the world and serve to correct the gradual and insensible corruptions of religion. But the spirit of which I am speaking is the most alien to that of inquiry; it might be called the ghost of inquiry, which no sooner finds a doubt than it leaves it and stirs up the waters of life to bring the sediment of them to the top.

(2) But once more let us consider one other cause of unbelief, and that the most serious of all—the corruption of the human heart, a cause which applies not to the few but to the many. By the corruption of the human heart I do not mean original sin, that natural state of evil into which it has pleased God that we should all pass at our entrance into this world, but actual corruption, the leading a worldly and

immoral life—falsehood, malice, uncharitableness, fornication, drunkenness, and such-like things, which all mankind regard as evil, and about which there can be no mistake. He who does any of these things will have a great temptation either to deceive himself about religion or to disbelieve religion. God has so ordered the human mind that our reason is in a great measure dependent upon our will—we cannot separate the one from the other. And when we are permanently and habitually leading a life which upon any view of another world, if there be another world at all, cannot but deserve God's wrath, it follows almost by a sort of natural logic that we shall cease to believe what we have so little interest in believing. It may be that from the treasury of self-deceit we shall furnish ourselves with some new disguise, that we may learn to look upon our own evil as good: it may be that religion will silently drop out of our minds as though it had never been, and we shall live and die as the brutes that perish—at any rate we shall lose the sense of its vital power: it may be also that we shall openly disown or attack it, making our jests ring against the failing of its professors, apprehending only its difficulties, perceiving only its evils, and all this to conceal from ourselves and from others the state of our own souls.

Not to pursue further this train of thought, let us briefly look at the same subject from the other side, not of unbelief but of belief. There is the belief of the head and the belief of the heart. And these two

blend together in one. As the heart believes, the objects of belief gradually clear and become definite to us. We no longer use words merely: we feel within us that they have a meaning: but our inward experience becomes the rock on which we stand: it is like the consciousness of our own existence. Can I doubt that He who has taught me to serve Him from my youth upward—He who supported me in that illness, who brought me near to the gates of death and left me not alone, is none other than God Himself? Can I doubt that He who gave me the impulse to devote myself to His work and to the good of mankind, who in some way inexplicable to me enables me to calm the violence of passion, the thought of envy, malice, impurity, to whom I go to lay open my breast and cleanse the thoughts of my heart, can be none other than the true God? Can it be that that example which He has given me in the life of His Son is other than the truth for me and all mankind? Here we seem to have found the right starting-point. ‘Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.’

Belief then must radiate from life: what we are, in a certain sense, we shall believe. And the degree of our belief must in a great measure depend upon the inward evidence we have ourselves obtained of the truth of the Gospel—no ingenious arguments, no historical evidence, can supply the lack of this. Custom, and habit, and knowledge, and convention are poor staffs for a man to lean upon when he comes

to die, when the memory fails and the intellect is no more able to exert itself, when the door of another world opens upon us in vacancy and darkness. What will remain then is the surest ground of our faith now—what has stood by us in all the changing scenes of life, what all men may have in common, what is the support equally of the philosopher as of the little child, what in the best moments of life we are conscious of: if there have been any devotion to the work of God, any utter sense of our own unworthiness, any special renunciation of worldly gain or advantages, any real act of self-denial though in a very humble sphere—that will be a real comfort and support in death, and, if not our only, is our highest ground of faith in life.

My brethren, I have ventured to speak to you on this subject, because it seems right that, at the present time especially, we should all of us consider a little the grounds of our belief. The least reflecting person cannot fail to be aware that during the last twenty years a great change of opinion has taken place in this University, and almost, it may be said, throughout this country. How far such changes of opinion may be the reawakening of a slumbering past, what reactions they may give birth to, whether they tend to further divisions or separations, to strengthen religion or the contrary, is not necessary to inquire here. So far as we inquire into them at all, let us inquire into them by the help not of our

individual sympathy or antipathy, but by the light of history and experience. Happening in this place they must exercise an undue influence over us. We are not so made as to be insensible to the opinions of good and earnest men, however transient and fluctuating, with whom we are in habits of daily intercourse. It would be a signal error to shut ourselves up in the hope of escaping them. We should lose much of the lesson that God has intended us to learn. And yet we would not build for eternity on that which may have changed ere twenty years are passed away. Our light, we feel, must be the light of the world, not that of a party or of a season, or of a place or of an individual.

And therefore, resting not upon all these changes of opinion but above and within them, let us lay for ourselves a good foundation, which can be no other than a pure and holy life. 'Whether there be opinions they shall change, whether there be systems they shall fail, whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away.' But charity never faileth—and truth never fails, and he who has these has the witness in himself. But custom may overlay them and prejudice may narrow them, and that which is in its true nature all-embracing and universal may become the watchword of persons or parties. Let us know of no other watchwords but the life of Christ, the mind of Christ, the cross of Christ. He who, kneeling at the Lord's table to-morrow, can discharge his mind

of all envy, malice, irritability, coldness, can raze from his memory all impurity, can pluck from his soul every disguise of untruth and self-deceit, can devote his life a sacrifice to the service of God and man, has that within him at which the clouds of unbelief fly away, which, as it is independent of the opinions of teachers and thinkers, will survive them in the hour of death and the day of judgment.

III

¹ *JERUSALEM IS BUILT AS A CITY WHICH IS AT
UNITY WITH ITSELF.*

PSALM cxxii. 3.

THERE must be some persons here present who are making acquaintance with Oxford for the first time. These, as well as all of us, I would invite to think a little of the fair scene by which they are surrounded and of the memories of the past. There is nothing more interesting than the first sight of a great and ancient city, and we should not allow ourselves through indolence or inadvertence to lose this impression, which may hereafter be so charming a recollection to us. Of no other English city can we say with equal truth, 'That the new which it has is old, and the old is ever entwined with the new.' There is probably no place in which so many eminent men have passed several years of their life. These things, if we have our mind and eyes open to them, are among the best recollections of Oxford. Here it is natural that something of the temper of the antiquary should be aroused in us, and that

¹ Addressed specially to Freshmen, on the first Sunday of the October Term, 1885.

through antiquarian interests we should find an introduction to history. 'Let us walk about Zion and tell the towers thereof,' and wander beside her streams and in her gardens; that, if our lives are spared, fifty years hence we may be able to speak of her to those that come after. Within the last half century the aspect of Oxford has undergone greater changes than in the two centuries which preceded; her borders have been enlarged, and in another half century the town will have yet further encroached upon the country.

Eight hundred years ago, as modern historians tell us, no traces are to be discovered of the existence of a University in this place; there was nothing but a small school attached to a monastery; many similar schools existed elsewhere in England at that time. Two centuries later there had arisen on this very spot a considerable college of which by regular succession we are the legitimate heirs and descendants. This, and two other colleges at Oxford and one at Cambridge, are the oldest surviving educational or collegiate foundations in England. Universities, like cities, are not made, but grow; we cannot tell exactly how or when they begin; even the meaning of the word 'university' and the definition of a college have been matters of dispute in recent times. The look of the city or the University of Oxford in the twelfth century is entirely unknown to us, and, almost equally so, the way of life which prevailed among the students.

The town was built upon a long and narrow strip extending about a mile and a half from the point of the river¹ where Magdalen College now stands to the ruined castle near the railway station. The remains of the north wall are still to be seen at the back of Holywell in the gardens of New College, and also just a fragment behind the houses on the opposite side of this street²; the lower part of the south wall, rising a few feet above the ground, is still left in Merton meadows. The site of this college was outside the walls, and probably for half a century it stood alone in the fields. The south-western side of the city was girt by the great monasteries, Rewley, Osney, and St. Frideswide, then by far the most lordly buildings of Oxford, which, like nearly all the monastic institutions of England, except where, as at Christ Church, they have been used as cathedrals or parish churches, have perished or exist only as ruins; some of them can hardly be said to have one stone left upon another. And within the city there were other monasteries of which neither a vestige nor a picture remains. It is an interesting historical question to consider why, both in England and in other countries, the school has taken the place of the church, and colleges and universities have increased and flourished while monasteries have fallen into decay—the one seeming to contain in them the seeds of life, the others—to whom, nevertheless, the European world in its early development

¹ Cherwell.

² i. e. Broad Street.

owed so great a debt—to have had in them the seeds of death only and to be gradually disappearing from the Christian world.

It would be out of place here to speak to you further of the buildings of Oxford, which, though so various, seem to have acquired a sort of unity. The study of architecture in our day has become a part of general education; it is necessary for the common purposes of life, and nowhere is there a better opportunity for pursuing it than in this place, where mediaeval English building is to be seen in a continuous series of examples, from the Norman arches of the Cathedral down to the excellent imitations or survivals which are found in Wadham College and in the southern front of Merton. I have said a few words on these subjects in the hope that you may make a study of them for yourselves in this place where they lie so near, and that you may learn to appreciate Oxford from many sides, and may realize how great is the inheritance of the past to which you have succeeded.

Yet more interesting than the external aspect of the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge is the reflection that they have been the homes of illustrious men during the whole or some part of their lives. Here they walked and talked; the halls and chapels and gardens which we frequent were their daily resorts; in some of the rooms which are still occupied by us they passed their days; the spires and towers which

we look upon, though not always unchanged, were to their eyes also a familiar sight. These things may be said to be accidents, as indeed they partly are. But mankind are so constituted that the thought of them makes a great impression upon our minds. In one sense these great men were more truly our fathers and makers than those other benefactors of whom mention is made in the prayer which precedes the University sermon, for they were the makers of our minds. They belong to different ages; they did not all bear the same stamp; even when living at the same time they were often the very opposite of one another. Some of them go back to days before the existence of colleges, as, for example, Grostête and Roger Bacon; they were great thinkers within the limits of their own times and bounded by the state of knowledge which then existed in the world. Beginning at a somewhat later date, nearly every college boasts of one or two among her sons whom she regards with a peculiar reverence. Such were Wolsey and Colet at Magdalen College, two of the greatest men of their time, but how different! The one the great statesman and political intriguer, the other the scholar and saint, who must have been contemporaries, or nearly so, at Magdalen; and at the same college in the last century, separated from one another by an interval of about seventy years, were Joseph Addison and Edward Gibbon. Such again at Christ Church in the previous century was John Locke, though alien to the genius

of the place; and more than a century later at Queen's College Jeremy Bentham, to whom the same remark may be applied. Such at Merton was Harvey, the discoverer of the circulation of the blood; or at Corpus in the olden time, Richard Hooker, and later, Thomas Arnold and John Keble. Such were the two great English statesmen, Lord Somers and Lord Chatham, at the neighbouring college of Trinity; or at University College, the famous lawyers, Lord Stowell and Lord Eldon. Once more, at Lincoln College there was John Wesley, the apostle (if such a name may be applied to any later teacher or preacher) of the whole English-speaking race throughout the world. Such at Oriel College was Cardinal Newman; or at Pembroke, better known to posterity than any man who ever lived, Samuel Johnson. And I must not forget to mention Hart Hall, called also Hertford College in the last century, which was not saved from extinction by the great names of Thomas Hobbes, John Selden, and Charles James Fox.

I have spoken to you of the past and of the great men who once resided within these walls, because such thoughts have an interest for us and may exercise an ennobling influence on our lives. I will now draw the subject closer and speak to you more particularly of the ancient society to which we belong and to which many of us feel that we owe so much. Shall I describe it as the house in which we live, the home to which we return in later years as that of a relation or friend?

May we regard it in a figure as the temple of God, which temple are ye? We may think of it also as a place of study or of society in which we are growing up from youth to manhood, a lesser world introducing us to a greater in which we hope to bear a part. We may think of it, too, as an institution having a long history, continuing by regular election or succession of persons for more than six hundred years—such an institution as exists only in England, beginning amid the wars of the English and Scotch and the differences of North and South, surviving the Reformation and the great Civil Wars, passing through many fluctuations of religion and philosophical opinion, both in our own and in other times, lasting without interruption to this day. We may think also with pride of the many eminent men with whom through it we may claim affinity, such as was John Wiclif, the first and greatest of English reformers, who, a little more than five hundred years ago, was taken to his rest; and we remark with interest that in later times, about a century and a half since, another great man, the philosopher and political economist, Adam Smith, resided for seven years within our walls; here he studied and thought, and laid the foundation of his two great works. There have been some, too, in our own day who have left a mark upon their generation—such were the late Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop Manning, Arthur Stanley, Dean of Westminster, Arthur Hugh Clough, Matthew Arnold, Henry John Stephen Smith,

Arnold Toynbee, all of whom, with two exceptions, have been Scholars of this college. And there have been others who have also left an example for us, if we are able to walk in their footsteps.

The modern history of this college regarded as an educational institution dates from about eighty years ago. Shall I give you some account of it, partly derived from my own recollection, partly from the tradition of those whom I knew in my early life? At the beginning of the century it was a small society, not containing a third of its present numbers. It has had a large share of University honours and successes, and such distinctions are not to be despised if sought after from a love of knowledge and not merely for the sake of getting on in the world. I do not wish to under-estimate them : they are a good beginning ; they afford proofs of industry and ability ; they give order and method to study. But something more is required in a college. Unity, and friendship, and loyalty, and public spirit, and intellectual energy, and a high standard of character and manners,—these are the elements which make a great society. In the year 1828 the Scholarships were thrown open to competition ; and this more than any other change we may regard as the turning-point in the fortunes of the college : it was the first instance of an election to a Scholarship by competition. There are two other causes to which I should attribute any measure of success which has been attained by us. First, the

personal and individual interest taken by the teachers in their pupils, now common, but not so common a generation or two back. Many distinguished persons have devoted themselves to the work of education in this college and have desired no better field for their energies. They have thought, not of themselves, but of others; they have lavished their time upon their pupils, and have been sufficiently rewarded by their gratitude and affection. A further cause of success has been the liberality in money matters which has become traditional among us; public interests have been preferred to private ones; and thus a small foundation has been able to vie with larger and wealthier ones.

Most persons who have reached mature life have a vivid remembrance of the three or four years which they passed at Oxford, especially of the first few days. These, like the first days of travel in a foreign country, leave an indelible impression on the mind:—I am speaking still from my own recollections. The change from school to the University was the greatest event which had happened in our lives, greater, perhaps, formerly than now: we were making a new start, we were full of hope and ambition. The world that was opening upon us had a great charm, and awakened the feeling of romance in our minds. We were independent as we had never been before. We sat down in our rooms and invited our friends. We were our own masters and

could do as we pleased. The beauty and the associations of the place, the antiquity of the buildings, the picturesqueness of the streets, produced a great effect upon us. A new and more liberal style of teaching and learning succeeded to the narrower régime of school. The characters of some of us grew as much in a term as they had grown in a year before. We delighted in the society of our fellows. Here was an opportunity of forming friendships such as never recurs in after-life. We were not confined in the choice of them to our own college; but from all colleges men were drawn together by common tastes and pursuits. There were characters, too, who made themselves felt among us: we were persuaded that many of our companions would rise to eminence in after-life. A kindly feeling was shown to poor men, and sometimes a great friendship would spring up between men of talent and men of rank or wealth, to the great advantage of both of them. No greater opportunities could be enjoyed by youth than were given to us forty or fifty years ago, though we had not the knowledge of ourselves or of other men or of the world generally which would have enabled us to turn them to the best account.

Human nature has not altered in the last half-century so much as we often suppose. There is greater refinement in the present day, and greater decorum: there is also more knowledge and steady industry. On the other hand, though on this point

I may hardly seem a fair judge, there was more heartiness and originality and force among the youth of that day, and there was not the same tendency to self-analysis. Still the two generations are not so unlike that we may not reason from one to the other or draw a lesson from the example of the past. The difficulties and temptations of the one are for the most part the difficulties and temptations of the other. The atmosphere of this place, instead of stimulating, seemed to unsettle some of them; they did not see that it was their duty to form habits of regularity and economy, or to resist the impulses of passion and self-indulgence; they did not understand that when the restraints of school were withdrawn, they must impose a higher restraint upon themselves; they were their own masters, but had not learnt to manage their lives. Some of them were carried away by the theological movement which was then in the air; they read or pretended to read the Fathers instead of the Classics; they did not see how small a place religion has in any party movement. Some rather exhausted than strengthened their minds by study; they were always poring over books, but added little or nothing to their stores; the simple truth, that the object of study is the enlargement and improvement of the mind, and not the mere acquisition of knowledge, hardly seemed to have occurred to them; they did not consider whether they could write better or think more clearly

or converse more agreeably, whether they grew in mind, whether they had gained energy : these were not the measures or tests which they applied to themselves. One or two made the serious mistake of withdrawing themselves from society. There were others who were not students at all, and yet were great lovers of the college : they were devoted to its games and amusements ; they sought to keep men together in society, and were much liked, and respected for their friendly and genial ways. There were others, again, possessed of great and various gifts, with whom it was a privilege to associate, whom owing to their retiring nature we hardly valued enough at the time.

The reflections which elder persons make upon the earlier years of their own lives can never be fully realized by the young. We must all learn for ourselves, partly because the circumstances of individuals differ, and also because no words can teach like actual experience. We do not readily see ourselves as others see us. If we were to attend to our own characters in youth, we might cure many faults and weaknesses which are gradually becoming a part of us. The work of ordering our lives is complex : there are defects, such as want of tact, want of punctuality, want of habits of business, which are as bad in their consequences as more serious moral faults. We want to strengthen the better elements in ourselves and to starve and subdue the worse ;

we want to get rid of the secret faults which are known to ourselves only, and to live in innocence and the fear of God. Changes of place and circumstances are gracious aids to moral improvement, like the change of air which often enables us to throw off diseases of the body. Let us ask ourselves a few questions now that we are about to enter upon a new scene or stage. What is the weakness which most easily besets us? Are we too liable to take offence, too sensitive, too apt to think that we are slighted, too dependent on the approbation of others? Of such defects of character let us beware, for, unless we do so, they will accompany us through life. Are we incapable of fixing the attention, liable to vagueness and inaccuracy, apt to forget what we have just learnt? Let us remember that these faults of mind or education will be fatal to our success, not only in the University but in the world. Or if there be any one to whom the silly, smiling, conceited image of self is always recurring, let him think how ridiculous this weakness makes him in the eyes of his fellow-men, let him shake off vanity and resolve to be a man. Or is he conscious to himself of graver sins? let him determine by the grace of God to lead a new life, and not allow the happiness of youth to be darkened by the shadow of evil which so easily overclouds it. Has any of us some trouble or care which we hardly like to impart to others? are we weary and disap-

pointed? does the effort of study at times seem too much for us?—Let us cast our cares upon Him, for He cares for us; let us keep our minds above our bodies, and be at rest. Is a young man negligent about his health, irregular in his hours, self-indulgent in eating and drinking, overstraining himself in body or in mind?—Let him be aware that for all these things he will have to pay a heavy reckoning in years to come. Has he fallen into debt or into some other shame or folly, and does he make the evil worse by concealing it?—Let him reflect that the errors of young men, however serious, are not fatal, and only become irretrievable when they persist in them: in money difficulties especially let him not be afraid to seek the help and experience of some older person.

Lastly, it is natural that we should seek to do one another some good,—that is a common form of friendship; and no doubt there are times when we all of us need the advice and sympathy of others. To many a few words of an equal uttered as if by chance have been of inestimable value; they have brought before them what they always knew, but have forgotten; they have made them understand how they were regarded by the eyes of one another and of the world. But neither in youth nor in later life are we allowed to go about obtruding advice upon others: the best influence is that which is never seen except by its effects; which is based

not upon the love of power, but upon affection and a sense of duty, which is reserved and never betrays the confidence of another. The weakest characters have often a passing desire to do good to their fellow-men, perhaps even to warn them against the weakness or vice which they have allowed in themselves. But the good which men can do to others is chiefly limited by what they are: example is better than precept. Kindness is perhaps the easiest way of doing good, and the safest; a friendly look, a hearty greeting, an unfeigned interest in the pursuits and successes of our companions. We must be able to forget ourselves before we can expect to have a place in the hearts of others.

IV

¹ *EXCEPT THE LORD BUILD THE HOUSE, THEIR
LABOUR IS BUT VAIN THAT BUILD IT.*

PSALM CXXVII. 1.

THE Psalmist expresses with a fervour and power, greater perhaps than has ever been felt or found utterance in any other age or country, the longing of the soul after God and the desire to live always in His presence. All that is good upon earth is His work; men only succeed in proportion as they obtain His favour; the best of them is that they are His servants. They have a feeling of repose and security when they meditate upon Him; they are raised above the accidents of this life when they are able to say, 'Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation.' The law of God (not the five books of Moses, for they were not as yet collected), but the ideal of law, the highest truth and rule of life which he was capable of conceiving, was to the Israelite what the *idea* of good or beauty was to the Greek

¹ Preached at Balliol in October, 1870; the Master's first sermon after his election. The re-building of the college was then in progress.

philosopher. Perhaps they neither of them exactly knew what they meant,—for such thoughts cannot easily be defined,—but they meant something purer and higher and holier than they found in themselves; they were trying to rise out of themselves that they might rest in God and the truth. By the help of their God the Israelites of old seemed able to do everything, without Him nothing. The victory in battle was only given them because the Lord fought for them: they were only safe while He was watching over them. ‘As the hills stand about Jerusalem, so standeth the Lord about them that fear Him.’ In the darkness of the night, on the great waters, in the valley of the shadow of death, ‘I will fear no evil, for Thou, Lord, art with me.’ These and the like words will probably remain the most natural expressions of religious feeling as long as the world lasts. And at them, as at some distant light or fire, we seek to rekindle the flame of Divine love in our hearts.

Yet I think we must remark that this language of the Old Testament is liable to be a source of error, if used altogether without reflection. The religious ideas of one age require to be translated into the religious ideas of another. The religious thoughts of one age may become the feelings of another; the religious truth of one age may become the religious poetry of another. The language of the Old Testament is personal and individual, speaking heart to

heart as one man speaks to another, telling of a God who is indeed always described by the Psalmist or Prophet as the God of justice and of truth, and yet asserts His despotic power to pull down one man and put up another. And here the error of which I was speaking is liable to creep in. For some of this language might lead us to suppose that God, like men, has His favourites, that He prefers one man or one nation to another, that He encourages one undertaking and throws difficulties in the way of another. Ages upon ages pass away before men attain even to that degree of clearness in their ideas of God of which the human mind is really capable. And I think that we must recognize that the Hebrew Prophets and Psalmists do present to us an imperfect and partial conception of the Divine Nature compared with that which our own hearts and consciences, enlightened by Christianity and the study of history and nature, give us in the present day. There must be a silent correction of the familiar words of the Psalmist when we use them, if they are to express the truth for us. For we know that God is not sitting, as He is represented in some pictures, on the circle of the heavens, but that His temple is the heart of man; we know that He is not the God of one nation only, but of all mankind; we know that God helps those who help themselves. Except men build the house, the Lord will not build it; except the watchmen keep guard in the city, the Lord will not guard it. In everything the means are

to be taken first, the laws of nature are to be studied and consulted :—then, and only then, the blessing of God follows us, and, in the language of the Psalmist, ‘the Lord prospers our handiwork.’

But then a very natural question may be asked :—How does this higher work differ from the results of ordinary human prudence? If I have made careful preparations, if I have military genius, if I have the material means, shall I not win the battle, accomplish the enterprise, whether (to speak very bluntly) God wills or no? The answer to this is that the best part of human actions is the spirit in which they are performed ; the spirit which bears witness with His spirit and unites us to Him. And, secondly, the highest use of the means involves the recognition of the end : in politics, for example, of some final triumph of righteousness which by gradual steps we hope to approach more nearly, of some increased diffusion of enlightenment or happiness which we know to be the will of God. There is no presence of God in the higher sense in the operations of war or business, in the skill of the engineer, in the art of the painter, in the trivial round of life, any more than in the greater aims of earthly ambition. But when in war or business, or the fulfilment of their daily duties, say in this University or college, men begin to be animated by higher motives, and feel that they are living, not for themselves or for their own individual good, but for others, working together for God and His laws, then

they may think of God building the house, of God keeping the city. When they have acted as if all depended on themselves, they may feel that everything depends on God and returns to Him. Not 'cast thyself down hence, for He shall give His angels charge over thee,' but take regular steps, use every precaution,—in that be like 'the children of this world';—there is a sort of impiety in asking for anything which we do not take the means to attain,—and then leave the event to Him; partly because every event and every work has another and another beyond, so that we can never be left hopeless if we fix our minds on the true good of man, and partly because, although God governs the world by fixed laws, He takes care of us as a whole, and His care and order begin in this life and continue in another.

The Old Testament speaks of the Lord building the house; the New Testament speaks of that temple which we ourselves are,—of which, in the figurative language of St. Paul, we are said to be lively stones,—that temple in which the Holy Spirit takes up His abode, which is defiled by sin and evil, as the courts of the Temple of Jerusalem were by ceremonial impurity and pollution. Every place or nation or institution or individual may be described as a heavenly city, an ideal state, and on such a form of life we may endeavour to fix our eyes, though we know that human nature does not admit of these ideals in fact,—we can only approach them. Even this college may

be thought of without extravagance as a place in which we desire to have the presence of God, who is dwelling here more or less in proportion as a spirit of right and truth, of gentleness and kindness, prevails amongst us. And in looking back on its past history we may without extravagance have the feeling that 'it grew up we cannot tell how,' because God has prospered us, and in the thought of the future as well as in the past, 'Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but vain that build it.'

Of this college, which is the external bond of union between most of us who are met together in this chapel to-day, I should like to say a few words to you just as they occur to me regarding the institution to which some of us are so deeply attached, first, as a place of education; secondly, as a place of society; thirdly, as a place of religion.

First, I am not going to draw out theories of education,—there is no time for that,—but I want to impress upon you first of all the unspeakable importance of the four years which are spent in the regular course of this place, the four critical years of life between about eighteen and twenty-two, in which we pass from youth to manhood, when a young man is first beginning to be his own master, and becomes far more responsible to himself than he is to any one else. He has to improve his mind, to eradicate bad mental habits, to acquire the power of order and arrangement, to learn the art of fixing his attention, to con-

centrate all his powers upon his work. In a certain sense he has to think about himself; to observe his own defects, whether of memory, or logical power, or accuracy, or good taste, which is also a want of logical power. And sometimes he may note in himself peculiarities which distinguish him from others (and, indeed, we are all inclined to think ourselves much more exceptional beings than we really are). But there may be also real peculiarities, such as weakness of health, or over-sensitiveness, or mental trial, and then a man must find out the way of curing himself; he must be his own tutor and his own physician, not without the thought of a Good Physician, by whose help he may even turn the trials of the body into blessings for the soul. And above all he must not give up the race of life; for there have been many of these 'broken lives' of men who seemed as if they would never again be able to do anything, from whom the greatest benefits have flowed to mankind and to knowledge. But these are exceptional cases, of which I speak only by the way; the great majority of us enjoy excellent health, and have no excuse for not making the very best use of our time. Still to all of us at times there is a good deal of trial in intellectual pursuits; we find that success does not attend us; we cannot read, we cannot write; our minds seem vacant, feeble, inattentive, and we are sometimes tempted to supply the temporary failure of our powers by an extraordinary and unwonted

effort. This is about as rational as if a paralytic were to attempt to regain the use of his limbs by performing some great feat of strength. What we want is rest; and it is well that we should understand this, at the same time maintaining our permanent resolve, and not allowing a temporary weakness to become an excuse for irregularity and idleness, or to disorder the scheme of our lives. And so, little by little, day by day, sometimes with considerable gaps and interruptions, we go on accumulating knowledge. The additions each day which build up the mind may be slow and small, but at the end the result is very great. Whether we are really fit for a profession, for a place in the world, depends mainly on the use which we have made of our years here. I do not say that the loss of them is irreparable, or that some men who have wasted and idled their time here have not recovered themselves in after-life. But I think we may say without exaggeration that there are no years of equal importance, and that we shall never have such another start or beginning in life, in which old things (including the recollection of our faults and follies of youth) pass away and all things become new.

The system of education in this place is, as you know, very much based upon University Honours. There can be no doubt that the introduction of them at the beginning of this century breathed new life into the dry bones of the past. They give us a fixed

aim towards which to direct our efforts ; they stimulate us by the love of honourable distinction ; they afford an opportunity of becoming known to those who might not otherwise emerge ; they supply the leading strings which we also need. And therefore I cannot join in the complaints of those *laudatores temporis acti*, who complain that they tend to narrowness and superficiality ; telling us, as they are fond of saying, that there were a few deep pools formerly, and that now there are many shallow streams. But still in reading for Honours every one should understand that the value of them, the love of them, may be carried too far. They do not *make* us what we are ; they are but the *stamp* of what we are, which may be sometimes wrongly imposed. And the mere reading for Honours instead of reading for the sake of knowledge and mental improvement—things more precious far—is certainly rather degrading. Those who desire that knowledge should be pursued in a liberal way and for its own sake are not wrong in that ; but they are wrong in supposing in this, as in so many other cases, that either freedom or power can be attained without order and regularity and method. The restless, sceptical, aesthetical habit of mind, which passes at will from one view of a subject or from one kind of knowledge to another, is not intellectual power. There is no real opposition between ability and industry. Different men work in different ways, but the greatest ability is almost

always also the greatest industry. I fully acknowledge that University Honours are a test of a peculiar kind. And I would wish to draw the attention of those who are about shortly to leave us to this point,—that the competition of after-life will be very different from that of a University : then there will be no more leading strings, but they will have to grapple with life and with the world. They will be by themselves, no longer sustained by a society ready made for them ; they will have to do with men as well as books ; they will depend more on the force of character which they have or can acquire, and less on merely intellectual qualities. The end may be a long way off, and only to be attained in any degree after the obscure labours of many years. Here is certainly a very different test of the ability of men starting in life. There is probably no greater discipline than this if a man takes the long years of waiting in a right spirit. And sometimes he may think to himself of that higher race, which extends over the whole of life, to which no earthly honours are assigned, and of which, in the figurative language of Lord Bacon, ‘God only and the angels are spectators.’

But beside our duties to ourselves, there are duties which we owe to our neighbours. It is characteristic of the English Universities more than of any other similar institutions, that they are not merely places of education, but places of society. Or taking the word in a wider sense, society may be said to be a great

part of education. There are several respects in which the society of a college differs from any other. First, because such a society is composed almost entirely of young men in whom the pulse of life beats high ;—they are full of hopes and have comparatively little experience. Secondly, because the members of a college are always together, engaged in the same pursuits, attending the same lectures, interested for the most part in the same topics. Hence the connexion between them is, very close, and they have great opportunities of intimacy. They are like a family, and may be truly said to be every one members one of another. They exercise a greater influence on one another than friends and acquaintances do at another time of life. Thirdly, they come from all corners and places, from different religious bodies,—as we may now say with pride and pleasure,—from various parts of the world, from different ranks of society, many almost finding their first introduction to life in their entrance here : to some the gaining of a Scholarship or of a Fellowship has been the real turning-point of their career. There is no such common landing-place at which all classes meet in later years. I do not look upon the distinctions of ranks in society as the appointment of God ; but they are facts which in the present state of the world no sensible man will desire to overlook. They are often regarded with jealousy ; the sensitive mind of Pascal was disposed to complain bitterly that to be a man

of rank is twenty years of life gained ; but the truth is that they are easily overmatched by personal qualities. There is something that one rank may always learn from another ; and no one can be said to have any real or complete knowledge of the world, if it be confined only to his own clique. Those who have not the advantages of position or fortune should not be sensitive about them ; for they are not really so important as they appear. Those who have them should regard them as trifles, of which they never think for a moment themselves and which they never obtrude upon others. And they will find their reward in not belonging to one class only but to all, which is higher and nobler far, taking a real human interest, not in one set of persons only, but in all, not confined to the narrow, threadbare topics, about individuals, about amusements, and the like, but freely able to talk with all, finding the natural sympathy which unites them to be stronger than the accidents which separate them. A distinguished friend of mine, looking back upon the years when he and I first entered the University, has often said to me, ‘ That there was no place at which a stranger was more generously received than by young men at Oxford.’ May that long continue to be the spirit of the whole place, and of this college in particular, the spirit of true courtesy and gentlemanly feeling, which gladly welcomes all and seeks to make them at home under their new circumstances.

For, indeed, a society which is divided into cliques and parties and factions and marked by invidious distinctions, which is unable to join or succeed in any common pursuit or amusement, is not a society; it has lost all the advantages of union. There is a duty in the fulfilment of which a great deal of good may often silently be done, which, though a great Christian duty, is sometimes described by a homely phrase, 'the duty of keeping men together.' Not that we can force into a constrained harmony absolutely dissimilar elements: in this, as in all other social matters, some tact must be shown. And there are a few happy natures who are a sort of intermediates to the rest of the world, who make all men kin and at home when they meet in their presence. There are also some other qualities which are required in a society. We seem to need self-respect, which is also the true respect of others, not that foolish consciousness of self which cannot bear the ordinary interchange of jest and earnest in conversation, but that doing and saying nothing which you would not like that others should do or say to you. There is a sense of security which you have with people when you know that from some inbred courtesy they never by any possibility could say anything which would wound the feelings of another. Lastly, I need hardly tell you that violence and noise and practical joking, or any invasion of the peace of our neighbours (however excusable and innocent in the riot of

youthful spirits), do really tend to degrade the character of a society (just like vulgarity or bad manners of any sort) far beyond their moral guilt. And we think that a college may be expected to present the type of a Christian institution, in which men are not merely admired for their strength of body or their force of mind and character, but some consideration may be shown for the weaker brethren also.

Thirdly, I should like to say a few words about a college as a place of religion. There is the same sort of difference in this as in the last case,—that persons of more different opinions meet together here than probably in any other situation in life: and perhaps here, too, we may find that the ties which unite us are greater than the oppositions which separate us. Those who are present here probably come from families who have the most various sentiments, and there are some who have never heard a word of doubt cast upon their family or traditional belief. What can we do for them, and what can they do for themselves, and how can we pilot them safely over the difficulties which may begin to surround them? I do not mean to say that these differences are unimportant, or that they have not great influence on nations and on Churches. But in this place may we not find the practical solution of them in a common work? may we not turn from the points of difference which are less to the points of agreement which are greater far? For, admitting that we are disagreed about many

questions of doctrine and many historical facts, including the great question of miracles, are we not agreed about the first principles of truth and right, about the nature of God, about a future life, about the teaching of Christ? Have we not enough in common to carry on the war against evil? The question that a young man has really to answer is not 'What is the true doctrine of the Sacrament,' but how he shall make the best use of his time, how he shall order his expenses, how he shall control his passions (that they may not, like harpies, be pursuing him all through life), how he can live to God and the truth instead of living to pleasure and to himself. Can we not find a common ground in the needs which we all feel? And in the meantime, if we wish to carry this out, we must abstain from personality and bitterness which so easily slip out when religious zeal is strong. We must exercise some reticence (and indeed we can easily find better topics of conversation than religious controversy), if we mean to live at peace with all mankind. 'Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity!'

We have been engaged during the last three years in building up the college from without, and we hope that the work which is now nearly completed may contribute to the comfort and well-being of many generations. We are certainly better off than our predecessors ever were in the external appliances of study, which will soon be carried about as far as it

seems possible to carry them. Truly when we look at the beauty of this University, its ancient buildings, its libraries, its gardens, we have reason to feel that 'our lot has been cast in pleasant places.' Our circumstances seem to be the very opposite of those in which the student of the Middle Ages sometimes found himself, when from the cold of winter he was obliged to intermit his daily task carried on in the open cloister, or on the steps of the neighbouring convent. We, on the other hand, have every comfort; perhaps the path of life is made rather too easy to some of us. The difficulties that stand in our way are mostly of our own making—want of energy or principle in ourselves. These very comforts which we enjoy in this place should be motives to a higher way of life, partly out of gratitude to the Giver of them, partly from a fear that we may become too dependent on them and unequal to the rougher struggle of life which we may hereafter have to endure in the care of a parish or in the effort to enter a profession. To have escaped the trials of poverty in early life may either make us more or less fit to meet them if ever they actually come upon us. It was a wise saying of a great man, 'that only by living above the goods of fortune can you have the true use of them.' For all that men have is nothing in comparison with what they are themselves. Even the world itself is upon the whole ready to acknowledge the truth of this.

We desire to be a united society, amid many differences of temperament and character and opinions, animated by a common *esprit de corps*, and bound to each other by the interest of the work in which we are engaged ; rejoicing heartily every one of us in the success and prosperity of all our members, both here and elsewhere, and avoiding the misunderstandings and causes of offence which so easily arise among those whose daily life is passed almost in common. This college, as I have already told you, after more than two centuries of obscurity and decay seems to have revived about eighty years ago ; it grew up we can hardly tell how,—through the care and labour of some who have now entered into their rest, with the help of some fortunate accidents, by the blessing of God. And now the duty of maintaining it has descended to us, and we must not neglect the trust which has been committed to us. Every one must bear his part in improving its methods of study and teaching, in raising the tone of society, in infusing life and intelligence and energy into every part of it. So we may hope to be able to hand on the lamp to another generation. And looking forward to the future, we pray that this college may continue to grow and increase, not merely in the vulgar sense of success, but in a higher one,—that it may be the nursery of Christian and noble thoughts which have in them some seeds of human improvement, to which eminent men may look back as the cherished home

of their early days, in which those who are returning from distant lands, India or the Colonies, or who from any cause are friendless or isolated, may receive a welcome; and that those who are present here to-day may recognize that in this place something of value was contributed to the formation of their character and their usefulness in after-life.

V

1 WHEN THE SON OF MAN COMETH, SHALL HE FIND FAITH ON THE EARTH?

LUKE xviii. 8.

IN many ages of the Christian Church men have entertained an expectation that Christ was shortly about to reappear on the earth. And some of the words of our Lord Himself seem to favour the expectation, as for example His saying, 'There be some here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God come with power'; or, 'This generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled;' while in other passages He refuses to speak of the 'times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power.' From a verse in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, 'Then we which are alive shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air,' we gather that St. Paul had a similar belief, although at a later period he desired rather to 'depart and be with

¹ This sermon was preached at St. Mary's, the University Church, on November 26, 1871. This being the first time that the Master preached as Head of his College, the sermon attracted special attention, and was looked on as to some extent defining his position.

Christ.' And in the first century of the Christian era the same expectation was widely spread, some affirming that Christ would reign for a thousand years; others again imagining that His re-appearance was delayed a little while; others again saying, as we might do, 'Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers have fallen asleep all things have remained as they were from the beginning.'

In times of religious excitement or under the pressure of great and overwhelming calamities, the belief in the second coming of Christ has tended to revive, and many have fancied that they saw the sign of the Son of Man coming in the clouds. Such a belief prevailed in one of the most miserable periods of human history, the beginning of the tenth century, when, as the great Catholic historian, writing of that time, says, 'Christ was still in the ship, but asleep.' For there have been cruel days in the history of the world; far worse formerly than any which occur now, worse even than those which we have witnessed during the last year or two¹, because more enduring and hopeless. These naturally led men to say, 'O Lord, how long?' And even in our own times, we have known persons or societies among whom the shadow of the ancient belief still survived, who from some peculiarity of character, and on some ground probably derived from Scripture, such as

¹ During the Franco-German War and the possession of Paris by the Communards.

the mention of 1260 days in the Book of Revelation, have fixed a certain year or day at which the great change was to occur. But they one by one have dropped off and gone to their rest; their opinions have passed away with them. Men have learned that 'not here, not there, or to mortal eye was the vision of Christ to be revealed.'

This belief in Millenarianism was condemned as 'a Jewish dotage' in one of the original Articles of the Church of England, published by King Edward VI. And, although we may be thankful that the number of the Articles was reduced from forty-two to thirty-nine, yet we can hardly regard this opinion which was condemned by them as perfectly allowable, or as wholly free from evil consequences. For when men have fancies about religion, which however natural in the Primitive Church and in the age of the Apostles ought to have been refuted long ago by universal experience, they are apt to lose their hold on the main principles of Christian truth. The visions in which they indulge have an absorbing effect on their minds; they lead them into nonsense; they withdraw them from their fellow-men. While they are looking into a vacant and distant heaven for a sign, the real signs of the times, which are everywhere around them, seem to escape them. For we see furthest into the future—and that is not far—when we most carefully consider the facts of the present.

And therefore I shall not attempt to explain what

is the meaning of Christ's coming again; 'whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell.' Nor shall I ask the question which was put to Christ by the mother of Zebedee's children, whether His saints and Apostles shall reign with Him, sitting upon thrones and judging the kingdoms of the earth. These are questions which can never have an answer; we might as well argue about poetry or figures of speech. There is a deeper meaning in the words of Christ than can be realized by mere imagination, or by any effort of the painter's art. And first I shall consider what is the feeling with which this saying was uttered, 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith upon the earth?' Many persons may scarcely have noticed these words, or may not have attempted to reconcile them with their previous conception of the character of Christ. Secondly, I shall inquire, 'if Jesus Christ were to come again upon the earth,' what judgment He would pass upon us and upon our lives, and how He would apply the precepts of the Gospel to modern society. That appears to be a natural way of bringing Christ home to ourselves. And thirdly, I shall ask 'what indications there are that the kingdom of heaven is come among us,' or in other words, what reason we have for thinking that the condition of life and of mankind ever can or will be regenerated, whether by the change of external circumstances, or by the agency of moral or spiritual influences.

We easily imagine that Christ and His Apostles certainly foreknew the triumph of the Gospel; that they had no griefs or disappointments, no pain at the ingratitude or hardheartedness of mankind. But if this had been so they would not have been in all points 'tempted like as we are.' The preconception is natural, and yet is not supported by the words of Scripture. There we see Christ like some great teacher of other days, like the prophet Elijah for example, now accepted, now rejected of men, now seeming to feel a sort of inward triumph—'The hour is coming that the Son of Man shall be glorified'; and yet experiencing at the last a depth of darkness and desolation to which no sorrow in this world can be compared—'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' He had come into the world to fulfil His Father's will, to deliver men from evil, to reunite them to God, to lay the foundations of a new and spiritual kingdom. And multitudes had believed on Him, or seemed to believe on Him, but by degrees they had fallen away, after the chief priests had commanded that those who confessed Christ should be put out of the Synagogue. So St. Paul, walking in the footsteps of his Master, in his old age when his life of missionary labour was drawing to a close, utters the sorrowful words, 'Thou knowest that all they of Asia be turned away from me.' And we cannot be wrong in supposing that at the end of our Lord's life the number of His followers

was much fewer than a year or two previously; for we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that the first Christians meeting in the large upper room at Jerusalem were not more than 120. The opposition had waxed hotter than at first; the suspicions of the government had been aroused. And many who were willing enough to receive the first impressions of the Gospel, in time of persecution fell away, for they had no depth of earth in their natures; and the new sect which had arisen seemed to be on the point of being stamped out.

Can we imagine the feelings of some prophet or great religious teacher when he finds the world turning against him, and he begins to understand the difficulty of telling men what is at variance with their old prejudices or traditions? He does not lose faith in the truth, but he is inclined to despair of his fellow-men. There are such enmities to be overcome, such misrepresentations to be cleared up, such a mass of obloquy to be undergone, and he without any power to stem the rising tide of ignorance and fanaticism, is but a feeble mortal who can trust only in himself and God. That is the feeling under which the prophet Elijah says, 'It is enough, now, O Lord; take away my life, for I am no better than any of my fathers.' He has no personal ambition, but he feels the want of other men's sympathy, to whom he desires to do good, and they will not; and to whom he would preach the truth of which his own

mind is full, but they will not hear him—‘How often would I have gathered thy children together,’ and ‘Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.’ And, perhaps, he wonders whether, if he were to leave his own people or country, and come again to them, like the Athenian legislator, they would receive him; if the prejudices against him would have worn away, or if he would still be the object of hatred and persecution. And still loving his brethren, like St. Paul, and eager that they should be saved, he also knows that the difficulties and disappointments which have hitherto attended him may be his portion to the end. He is not certain that his Gospel will ever triumph; but he is certain that it is the truth, and he is willing that his own name should pass away, that there should be no reaction or compensation, if he can only be confident that he is doing the will of God, and keeping that which is entrusted to him. As his mission to his fellow-men appears to fail, he clings more and more to the thought of God. Somewhere, he cannot tell where, by some means, he cannot tell what, he believes that the ways of God will be justified to man; of himself or of his own reward he never thinks, all that is absorbed in his love of God. Nor even in the depth of his agony does he really fear that he can be cast out by him, though for a time he is walking in the shadow of death. There have been struggles in men’s minds greater and more full of consequences to the

world at large than the battles of the earthly warrior. The capacities of the human soul are not exhausted by the shallow loves and fears, or hopes, or enmities of ordinary men. There have been a few who, following the example of the Lord, have thought of others only and not of themselves, of the future as well as the present, and who have rejoiced and sorrowed, not for their own good, or evil, but for the good and evil of their church or their country, yea, and of the whole human race. We can hardly enter into their thoughts, for they are raised above us; they may have been religious teachers burning with zeal for the salvation of mankind, or they may have been statesmen, doubtful perhaps about the present, and careless of party and personality, seeking to lay the foundation of the true national prosperity in the far distant future. There have been but a few such in any age, or in all ages of the world, but from them have been derived the greatest blessings to individuals and churches and states. For in any class, and in any occupation, to have shown a higher type of character, a larger sympathy, a stricter sense of duty, a deeper insight, is an inestimable benefit to mankind. Even good men are apt to follow the ways of their companions; they do as others do and do not attempt to apply the words or example of Christ to the religious society in which they live; a few, a very few think for themselves. And these may often have trials of which the world has no experience; it is

a stranger to their hopes and aspirations; it cannot understand that they should be depressed by the scenes and sufferings of men around them. Still less can it understand that when all things are against them, and their hopes seem to be blasted, still failing, dying in the service of God, they should be able to trust Him in whom they have believed.

Thus I have endeavoured to transfer in a figure the words of Christ to other men, that we may see in a glass imperfectly the nature of that struggle which was passing in His mind. The life of Christ in the Gospels seems to become sadder as we draw nearer to His death. This sadness is not caused by the prospect of lingering suffering; the ingratitude and hardheartedness of men pierce sharper than that. But He is more and more alone, as He approaches to the end of His work on earth. No one seems to understand Him; even His brethren and His apostles constantly mistake the meaning of His words. And more and more, if I may use such an expression, He retires into Himself and God.

And now I shall proceed to ask the second question: If Jesus Christ were to come again upon the earth, how would He regard us who are called by His name, and the bodies of Christians who acknowledge Him to be their founder? Would He belong to any of them, or would He have something to say to all of them in common? We know that the

founder of a religion is not like the teachers of it in after ages; he is not bound by convention and tradition, and he has a high and different standard. He tells us the truths which we least wish to hear, and pierces the mask or garment of self-satisfaction in which we cover ourselves. For although we do not exactly praise ourselves individually, yet we are always forming ideals of our Church, our nation, our form of worship—perhaps even our church polity, which we fancy to accord with the primitive model; and we love to dwell upon their excellencies and overlook their defects. But to the mind of Christ all these things are of secondary importance—they are for the most part means towards ends and not the only means—in comparison of the one question, ‘Are men becoming better?’ That is the shortest, the simplest, and the most vital question, which any man can ask about himself, or about his church, about the society in which he lives, or about the country of which he is a citizen.

An illustrious person not now living is reported to have said, ‘If Jesus Christ were to come again upon the earth, I have often thought that He would have been written down.’ He could not have approved of many things in our modern world, and therefore the world would probably have been at enmity with Him. When He heard of our religious parties ‘calling down fire from heaven on each other,’ must He not have said to them ‘Ye know not what

manner of spirit ye are of.' And when He saw that these religious divisions extended to the education of the young, may we not imagine Him to have taken a little child, and set him in the midst and asked whether we meant to make him the victim of a religious dispute? When he was told of another who belonged to a different persuasion unlicensed by any regular authority going about doing good, would He have said 'Forbid him'? Might He not have been heard repeating to those who insisted that they could literally eat His flesh and drink His blood, 'It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing'? Or to those who make casuistical distinctions about the meaning of words, or draw remote inferences from them, would He not have said 'Let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay,' or perhaps, 'ye make void the word of God by your traditions'? Or to those who exaggerate the importance of days, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'? For we can hardly suppose that He who came to destroy Judaism would have allowed Jewish errors to remain among Christians. Or when He saw the value set on times and places, and the pomp of outward ceremonial, would He not have said 'The hour is coming and now is, when neither in Jerusalem, nor in this mountain, men shall worship the Father'; and 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth?' Or to a rich and

luxurious age, would He have abstained out of delicacy, or any fear of misunderstanding, from repeating the parable of Lazarus and Dives? For the words of Christ necessarily go beyond the established ideas of religion, or the forms of polite society; they pierce like a sword into all things. And yet while they go so far beyond the received religious opinions of Christians in some respects, there are others in which they may seem to fall short of them.

He would have taught the new commandment, which is also old—purity of thought as well as of word and act; the not doing things that we may be seen of men, or laying up for ourselves treasure upon earth; the seeking first the kingdom of God, the forgiveness of injuries, the love of enemies—‘that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven.’ What! only the Sermon on the Mount! and we verily thought that He would have spoken to us of apostolical succession, of baptismal regeneration, of justification by faith only, of final assurance, of satisfaction and atonement; or that He would have told us, not that the Father came out and kissed the prodigal son, and fell upon his neck and wept, but that there was one way, and one way only by which men could be restored to the favour of God, or that He would have wrought a miracle in the face of all men and put an end to the controversy about them; but He only says ‘There shall be no sign given to this generation’: or that He would have told us

plainly when we asked Him about another life; but He only replies, 'In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage.' We thought that we should have been confirmed in those points of faith or practice in which we differ from others and that they would have been condemned by Him; that we should have heard from His lips precise statements of doctrines; that He would have decided authoritatively disputed points, saying, 'Thus and thus shall he think who would be saved.' But He puts us off with parables about little children, about the wheat and the tares growing together, about the new wine and the old bottles, about the wayward children sitting in the market-place, about a house divided against itself. Instead of answering our questions, He asks others which we cannot answer. The language of theology seems never to fall from His lips, but only 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour as thyself,' 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' He goes back to the first principles of truth and right; He speaks as one having authority, out of the fulness of His nature, and not like any creature whom we ever heard. And still when we listen to His words, the conviction is forced upon us, 'Truly this was the Son of God.'

And when rulers or statesmen try to draw Him to one side or to another, making Him utter their

shibboleths of order or of freedom, He replies to them, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' He does not ask under what form of government men are living (though this is very far from being unimportant), but He desires to infuse a spirit into all governments. In any of them and under any outward circumstances men may be His servants, and His Gospel contains principles wide enough to include them all. He will not take part with one class of society against another. His answer to the Galileans or Communists of His own day is, 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's,' and yet 'Blessed are the poor,' and 'Be not ye called Master.' And when He is told of terrible deeds springing from the power of some fatal idea, and followed by revenges yet more terrible, do we not seem to hear Him saying, 'Think ye that these fanatics were sinners above all men of that city'? For that is a thought which the Gospel allows us to hold in reserve, about the political criminal, whom the laws of society cannot suffer to live. And when hatred is rife among men, and dead bodies are lying in the streets, and the air is full of rumours and terrors, then is the time not to enlist our sympathies with either party, but to think of Christ weeping over Jerusalem, pitying them all alike.

I have been endeavouring to describe Christ as we may imagine Him beginning to preach the Gospel over again, not to one class only but to all of us

in a Christian country. And I think you will admit that I have not unfairly applied some words of the Gospel to our own times. There seems to be a very great discrepancy between the religion of Christ and the actual Church of Christ, between the lives and even the teaching of Christians, and the example and teaching of Christ, to which, as to a fountain of light, we repair, purging away the mists of eighteen centuries, which have insensibly gathered over the Christian world, yea, and over our own hearts also.

And now I would briefly consider the latter words of the text, 'Shall he find faith upon the earth?' or in other words, 'What prospect is there of any great moral or religious improvement among mankind?' We do not expect to see the sign of the cross in the heaven, such as is said to have struck on the eyes of the wondering emperor, nor are we prophets, or interpreters of prophecy. But there are indications in our own, as in other times, if we will read them, of some better state of the world which may be reserved for our children, or descendants, some hope of the future, which may animate this country and other countries, in spite also of appearances to the contrary.

For we do not suppose that the condition of the poor is always to continue among us as at present, or deny that the blessings of education and health and comfort may be equally diffused among all.

Can we doubt that such a state of society would be more truly Christian and more acceptable in the sight of God than that in which we live? The treasures of the earth have been unlocked, and wealth has increased among us, but we seem not as yet to have discovered the art of making the increase of wealth go hand in hand with moral improvement. Freedom of trade has won a great victory during the last thirty years, but education has followed after with halting and lingering steps. And some of us may fear that a great opportunity has been lost, and that the blessing of material prosperity has been partly turned into a curse. But the opportunity which has been partly lost may recur, the fruits of labour may still increase and multiply, and we may make a better use of them. The England of a hundred years hence may wear another and a smiling face—may perhaps show that an old country has the blessings of a new. There is no law of nature or of political economy which forbids this; the experience of other countries encourages us in the hope of it. And the Gospel will not allow us to entertain the fatal doctrine that nations, like individuals, tend necessarily to decay; or that of human evils there is not a great part which kings or statesmen may cause or cure.

Then again, as to our religious divisions. Are they not regarded differently now from what they formerly were; are they not, in some instances, be-

coming ridiculous? I do not mean to say that there is any likelihood of the different churches or sects of Christendom being united in a single communion. Nor is such a union desirable; at least, unless all men could be included, the world would only be divided more and more into two camps irreconcilably hostile to one another. But I think we have reason to expect that the evils of religious division will be much diminished, that the members of different religious bodies will be more and more able to co-operate with one another in schools and universities, in carrying on works of education and charity, in whatsoever things are pure and lovely, and of good report; not that they will give up the principles for which their fathers struggled, or the forms of worship which they have inherited from them. The characters of individuals and nations differ, and these differences enter into their religious beliefs. When men read history they find often that their position is the result of some accident or misfortune of the past, and this has a softening influence. And when they think of themselves and their brethen, as they are in the sight of God, they know that they are not really distinguished by the names which they bear in this world, but that in every nation and in every church he that doeth righteousness is accepted of Him.

Again, there seem to be signs that the opposition between religion and science, faith and knowledge, of which we have heard so much, is fading away.

For there is no real separation between truth and goodness; but for a time, and owing to some misunderstanding, they appear to part company. The novelties of science, like any other novelties, slowly find their way; the conjectures of science or criticism we are not called upon to accept until they are proven to us. Religious men are beginning to be aware that they must not deny any true fact of history or science. Scientific men are becoming conscious that human life cannot be reconstructed out of the negative results of criticism, or the dry bones of science. The first thoughts of persons often are: this is at variance with what I learnt in childhood, with what I read in scriptures, with what I hear from the pulpit. Their second thoughts are that no truth can be at variance with any other truth, and that they must wait patiently for the reconciliation of them.

These are a few of the signs of greater harmony prevailing the world, and of the spirit of Christ being more diffused among men. They may lead some of us to think of a new epoch in the history of Christianity, bearing the same relation to the Christianity of the three last centuries, which the Reformation did to the ages which preceded.

Whether this be too bold a speculation or not, we may be assured of this that there never will be a millennium on earth until we make one. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, is not evident by a sign from the heavens, or special provi-

dences vouchsafed to individuals, is not seen in the union of churches, or in the declarations of councils. The sun will rise as at any other time; the seasons will come and go; the generations of men will be born and die as in every other period of human history. The difference will not be in the external appearance of nature, but in the renewal of the spirit of man. Christ will appear to us not in the extraordinary, but in the common, in the dwellings of the poor, in the daily life of the family, in the integrity of trade, in the peace of nations. The increase of justice and truth, of knowledge and love, the diminution of suffering and disease, of ignorance and crime, the living for others and not for themselves, to do the will of God more and more, and not their own will, these are the only real signs in individuals or in nations that the kingdom of God has come among them.

And if any one desire to take part in this work, to restore the kingdom of God in a parish, a school, or a university, he must bear in himself that image which he is seeking to impress upon men. He who would teach others the lesson of reconciliation, must be free from personality himself; he who would instruct others must have knowledge; he who would support and guide them must have force of character; he who has the words of science and criticism on his lips must have the love of truth in his heart. Young men often form ideals of the good which they will do

to others ; they seem to desire something higher than the state in which they live. And after a time the ideals fade away, and they become immersed in their ordinary occupation ; they see another generation growing up with the same poetical visions and aspirations, and they prophesy the end of them, and perhaps laugh at them. Which is right ? The foolishness of youth is sometimes better than the experience of age. The misfortune is that the visions have fled away, when a man has acquired the power and knowledge which might in some degree have enabled him to carry them out. But if at thirty, at forty, at fifty, he could retain this first love of his youth ; if he could limit his aspirations to what was really attainable ; if he would study the means to ends ; if he would throw aside all drawbacks and every weight ; if he would live a little among the classes of whom he speaks, and learn from the failures of others ; if, in short, from being speculative he were always in process of becoming practical, those early visions might be the beginnings of a noble character, they might be a well-spring of everlasting life. To have felt thus even for a time is natural to every fine mind and to every higher intellect. He who is able to preserve them unchilled and unfaded amid the wear and tear of human things, and the temptations of the world, against the cynicism and epicureanism of the age, against the not less deadening influence of custom ; who is always growing in experience, and

builds up success on failures and disappointments, who is single in his aims, and is unaffected by the opinions of men, and works, not for his own, but for the work's sake, will bring the kingdom of God nearer to us, and show, in a figure more striking than any words, how Christ did the will of His Father while He was on earth.

VI

¹ AND MOSES SAID UNTO THE PEOPLE, 'FEAR YE NOT, STAND STILL AND SEE THE SALVATION OF THE LORD.'

Exodus xiv. 13.

THERE are many allusions both in the Old and New Testament to the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt. It was the beginning of Jewish history in which God was first revealed to them. The nation in after ages delighted to think of the sea opening a way to their fathers and returning to overwhelm the Egyptian host. The passover preserved among them the tradition of that night in which they were suddenly waked up and sent forth from the land. They pictured to themselves the waters standing as a wall upon the right hand and upon the left, while the pillar of light was turned towards them and the cloud rested on their opponents. In the ironical language of the Psalmist, 'What ailed thee, thou sea, that thou fleddest, and thou, Jordan, that thou wast driven back?' By faith, as the author of the Hebrews says, they passed through the Red Sea, as on dry land, which the

¹ Preached at Balliol, November 10, 1878.

Egyptians essaying to do perished. Like some wild animal they had escaped into the desert out of the toils of the hunter; they were now beyond his reach and could no more be detained by him. In the exultation of freedom there bursts from them that remarkable hymn, of which the burden is, 'I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.' The blow was struck at the oppressor not by their own arm but by the power of God. And with the deliverance from the house of bondage was inseparably connected in the mind of the Israelite another event in which the majesty of Jehovah was also revealed to him:—the giving of the Law! With liberty came order, with the existence of the Israelites as a nation was first proclaimed to them their rule of life, or Ten Commandments. And these Ten Commandments were transformed into a higher law, which ever and anon passed before the eyes of psalmists and prophets, the law of God written not on tables of stone, but on the heart of man. These were the two leading ideas or types of Jewish history: the coming up out of Egypt, and the revelation of the law on Mount Sinai. They were to the Israelite what the heroic struggle of Marathon and Salamis, what the laws of their ancient law-givers were to the Greek. The memories of them appeared to the prophet in the past or in the future

to be always in process of being forgotten and being recovered. The God whom the people of Israel worshipped was the God who brought them out of a strange land and who gave them the law. When they forsook it, He forsook them; when they forgot the traditions of their race, the national glory departed from them. And still they were confident that when they returned to Him He would receive them like a father pitying his children—so near is the relation of God to them as a nation that through them we seem to learn more than the world knew before of His relation to the individual soul.

The narratives in which the early history of the Israelites is recorded, like all other early histories, are partly of a poetical character. The poetry in them is a kind of prophecy, that is to say, it is not merely the work of the imagination but is inspired by a moral purpose. They were not written down or put into form for many hundred years after the times which they are supposed to describe. Yet they are not wholly unhistorical: of a connexion between Judea and Egypt many traces are found in the Egyptian monuments, as well as in the sacred books of the Israelites. It would be childish to maintain that great events like those recorded in the books of Moses did not take place, because they were attended by signs and wonders in an age when all great events were believed to be more

or less miraculous. The narrative from which the text is taken has been explained by saying that 'Moses, well acquainted with the tides of the Red Sea, took advantage of the ebb and passed over his army, while the incautious Egyptians attempting to follow were surprised by the flood and perished.' These words are taken from a well-known history of the Jews, written by a great and good man not now living, the late Dean Milman, and they breathe the spirit of the older school of German rationalists who were also good men and lovers of truth in their day. But I need hardly stop to point out the errors and inconsistencies which are involved in such a method of reducing Scripture to the laws of probability. For such criticism has had its day, and like many other labours of scholars under the sun, has passed away before a truer conception of early history. As little should this narrative be compared with the legends of Greek and Roman States respecting their own origin. Neither is it like that famous Greek history, which was composed 'in order that from what had been men might learn what would be in the order of human things.' The Israelite wrote or prophesied that he might tell of God in history, of His more immediate presence among His people Israel, of His wider dominion among the nations of the earth. Such writings, whether they take the form of prophecy or of history, are really prophetical. They have an ex-

traordinary moral interest and importance, and they will probably continue to supply the forms under which we conceive of some of the great truths of human life, as long as the world lasts. But we must not claim for them a degree of historical certainty which we neither find nor expect to find in other ancient histories—we cannot exempt them from the principles of criticism which we apply to similar writings: the attempt to do so would destroy not only their authority, but their meaning.

The spiritual house in which we live is not so constructed that if a single brick be taken out, the whole edifice falls to the ground. Rather by removing some of the false foundations the true ones are made to appear. The tree is not alive except it grow, and all growth implies some degree of change in which the old is entwined with the new or is transformed into the new. Such a process is not pernicious or dangerous, but healthy and natural; the real danger arises from the forcible suppression of it. We may say if we like, that religion and science move upon two different planes, and are like parallel lines which never touch; but the truth is that they are touching everywhere and at all times, in our minds and bodies, in education, in social and political life, in the history of the world; and therefore, if the speculative reconciliation of science and religion seem at the present moment to be distant and improbable, we should struggle

to attain the practical reconciliation of them in our own lives, not allowing mere scientific notions, whether physical or metaphysical, to extinguish in our minds the love of God or the power of prayer, nor on the other hand suffering the intensity of religious or devotional feeling to do violence to our sense of truth.

And now, leaving general considerations of this sort, which in our own day naturally come into our minds and are often repeated in many forms, I will return to the text, which we will take in its universal meaning, as it holds good for all times and may be applied to our own lives. 'Stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord.' These words speak to us of the temper in which we should meet the great trials and crises of life—that it should be the temper of calmness and strength, not of excitement and alarm—the temper which does all that can be done, and leaves the result with God. I propose to describe to you this temper or character and its opposite, as they are seen working in politics, in religion, in the lives of individuals.

The question was once asked by an eminent thinker, 'Whether nations, like individuals, could go mad.' The point of the comparison seems to be that in the madman are displayed forces both of body and mind, irrational ideas, yet transcending the ordinary powers of human nature. And there certainly have been great movements in the history of mankind, such as

the Reformation or the French Revolution, of which no one could foretell the extent or power. Then, in a figure, the fountains of the great deep might be said to be broken up. But such movements, like the cataclysms of geology, have been rare, and they seem likely to become rarer as the world goes on. The tendency of men in general is to stagnation rather than to movement; their customs and opinions do not quickly change, or their prejudices give way very readily. The stream of progress is not a great flood, which covers the earth, but rather like a narrow river which here and there overflows its banks. The forms of social even more than of political life remain unchanged, though some new ideas float upon the surface, or dance for a moment in the sunbeam. The course of human life generally, whether good or bad, is stable, commonplace, ordinary.

Yet this is not the aspect of the world which imagination presents to us. In spite of history and experience, we are apt to think that our own times are more extraordinary than any other times; we are too near to see them in their true proportions. This illusion is like that which makes the lives of individuals so much more interesting and important to themselves than the lives of any other persons can possibly be. We expect and partly hope that strange things will happen in our own day, or, as we sometimes oracularly say, not in our day, but in the day of those who will live to see them. The air is full

of murmurs of underground conspiracies, of volcanoes and earthquakes; spectres red and blue, Jesuits and Communists, seem to rise out of the ground. This is the temper of alarm which takes away all true insight into the world, and into human nature. In our own country we are not strangers to such presentiments. How often, since the days of our youth, have we who have reached middle and elder life heard such notes of ill omen as the following: that trade was never known to be so bad; that morality had fallen to the lowest point; that the age of chivalry was gone; that the future was dark, that the sun of England had set for ever: how many prophecies have been made about the fall of empires which still exist; of the ruinous character of reforms and improvements, in which all parties now seem to acquiesce! Besides the force of habit and prejudice, there has been a pleasurable excitement in imagining the world different from what we see it. Even in the anticipations of war and revolution, there is something not wholly disagreeable to us. They relieve the tedium of life; and when our fortune or spirits are depressed, we imagine the world to be in sympathy with us. And there are some persons who find comfort in making the worst of all things, to whom nature has granted the power of analyzing or criticizing their fellow creatures, but denied them the power of common action, or the inspiration of any noble or generous thought. To such persons their own contemporaries are always

pigmies, second-rate men and the like; they do not unite with others, lest it should take from them something of themselves. The burden of their song is, 'that you had better do nothing, for you can only do harm.'

These are the two opposite poles of political feeling, the one exaggerating, the other minimizing, actions and events; the one all enthusiasm and alarm, the other cynical and hopeless; the one always darkening or illumining the prospect with the ever-varying colours of its own mind, the other a state to which all political truth is summed up in the axiom, 'Let things alone.' To these I would oppose the temper of mind which sees things as they truly are, which is formed by facts, and never allows imagination to get the better of them; which is ready to fight hand to hand against real evils, and does not waste its strength upon the creations of fancy. There are difficulties in political as in private life, but there are none which ability and force of character may not overcome. The stars in their courses fight against no man; but the meannesses of the world, the prejudices of the world, the personalities of the world, may for a time defer his hopes. He will sometimes have to wait for occasions, not because 'the times are out of joint,' but because public opinion is not prepared, or ideas which he wishes to realize are insufficiently presented to the minds of men. In whatever country or age his lot may be cast, he will accept

heartily the conditions of statesmanship which it imposes on him. Often he will be borne on the deeper tide, when the currents of the surface are against him; he will turn away from the present and lift up his eyes to the future. And sometimes he will find that his reputation and character grow best in silence, for in public as well as in private there is a time to abstain from speaking as well as a time to speak. He knows the conditions of common action, and yet he will refrain from personality and party spirit; these he leaves to inferior minds. He inclines to regard his adversaries (unless there be some distinct proof to the contrary) as actuated by the same motives which inspire himself or his friends. Above all, he will learn the lesson which his own life teaches; he will acknowledge his errors; he will not from a miserable egotism try to justify or extenuate every proceeding in which he had a hand; 'I have made many mistakes in the course of life, and some of them very gross ones, but the English people have been generous and forgiven them,' is the touching confession of a venerable statesman lately deceased. I might quote the words of another: 'In the past there are many things that I condemn, many things that I deplore, but a man's life must be taken as a whole.' This is the language of great men who have had experience of human affairs. And yet while acknowledging their own errors and imperfections, they may also retain the sense that the political world

is a noble field for exertion, and that, although the future is not likely to be very different from the present, yet by patience, by experience, by the right use of opportunities, a man of sense in the course of life may do a great deal for his country or even for the world. It is not true to say

‘Of all the ills that human hearts endure,
How small the part that kings can cause or cure!’

For it is a great part which is directly caused, and a still greater which might be prevented by rulers and statesmen.

An eloquent voice has been raised among us during the last few years proclaiming that our material resources are being exhausted, that our religious belief is undermined, that our government is passing into the hands of the disorderly and ignorant. These are the characters which the hand of the prophet traces upon the wall, the signs which an able and thoughtful man reads in the world around him of England’s decay. But may we not reply to our ‘Cassandra’ that he looks only at one set of tendencies and takes no account of the other; that the causes to which he refers may affect the surface or outward appearance, but scarcely touch the inner life. For there is no necessary decay in nations. Though their trade may be diminished, their coalfields exhausted, their revenue declining, yet all that makes up the true life of man, intelligence, public spirit, morality, may still remain

to them. The ruggedest countries in old times have been the mothers of some of the noblest races; and it is very likely that the character of nations as of individuals may be purified and strengthened by the discipline of trial, and by a return to simpler modes of life. And what if in reply to our discerners of the signs of the times we could point to an increase of education, to a diminution of drunkenness, pauperism, and crime, to a greater accord and mutual understanding among the nations of Europe? And if it is religion and not morality which is imagined to be dying out among us, then we may reasonably hope that this is rather a change in the outward form, than in the inner character of our national life, and that as in other ages and countries the religious spirit has declined and also revived, so also it may revive after its decline among us, and may be found to have an influence greater than ever, because more indissolubly associated with morality. The same kind of answer may be made to the last of his three warnings. The many, we acknowledge, are not wiser than the few, although they may in the long run be better judges of their own interests. But neither does experience give us reason to suppose that the people are enemies to order or property, or that they cannot co-operate with the educated and intelligent in the government of a country.

It is recorded of our great teacher of the last century, that he was particularly impatient of

those who came to him complaining 'That the country was lost.' That keen observer of human nature was well aware, how trivial, how personal might be the motives which gave birth to this most commonplace of all sentiments. For the truth is that no country is really lost, though many go on for a time foundering through the degeneracy of a race or the imbecility of their leaders. Have not we ourselves within the last twenty years seen the disjointed parts or members of two great European nations¹ come together, and grow into a living whole, contrary to the expectations of prophets and philosophers? Have we not seen another great and noble people² for a time humbled in the dust? They were thought to be incapable of independence and scarcely to deserve it—and now not by deeds of arms, but by triumphs of a nobler kind, by thrift, by endurance, by good sense, by union among themselves, they have been restored to a foremost place among the powers of Europe. We too a few months ago were standing with our arms folded, humiliated and dispirited in the eyes of the world, and now the cloud seems to be partly breaking and we see some dawn of light; and although many difficulties remain and perhaps seem to increase upon us with nearer contact (such as there must always be in the attempt to reconcile hostile races and religions) we too begin to hope that we may bear

¹ Italy and Germany.

² France.

some part in alleviating the miseries and oppressions of distant nations, from whose destiny our own can never be wholly disconnected¹.

And, therefore, looking back on these examples, I say once more that the true temper of politics is the temper of confidence and hope. 'Stand still and see the Salvation of the Lord.' Be patient, and instead of changing every day with the gusts of public opinion, observe how curiously, not without a divine providence, many things work themselves out into results which no man foretold. The times are not evil, nor have mankind grown worse than of old. But neither now nor formerly can great works be accomplished or great deliverances wrought, either for nations or individuals, without energy and patience and a purpose which endures through many changes of circumstances and many lives of men, and a vision which sees events as they truly are.

In the second place, I was to speak to you of the temper of repose and confidence in the matter of religion. This is a sphere of thought and feeling in which, as of old, men seem especially subject to panic and alarm. Primitive tribes are startled at their own shadows on the mountains, and in later ages men project their own fancies into space

¹ The Congress and Treaty of Berlin, in the summer of 1878, checked the progress of Russia and added to the influence of England in the East.

until they assume monstrous and gigantic proportions. Like children they excite themselves, and their excitement like that of children is increased by the sympathy of one another. During the last fifty years, how many notes of alarm have been sounded in our ears? The day of Pentecost was believed to have returned; the reign of Christ on earth was daily, almost hourly expected; the end of the world was confidently placed in the year 1866. At the passing of some measure calculated to render justice to some oppressed class of our fellow Christians, an insult was supposed to be offered to the majesty of heaven. The Jewish prophecies were discovered to coincide minutely with the turn of political events in the Europe of the nineteenth century; the varying fortunes of the great Emperor Napoleon the First were discerned in them. Babylon was Rome, the Pope Antichrist, the loosing of the four angels by the river Euphrates was an allegory of the Revolution of 1848. And one by one the authors of these fancies have passed from the scene; having in several instances outlived their own interpretations of prophecy. And another and another generation has inherited their ideas and continued to build up the baseless fabric. I would not speak disparagingly of good and simple-minded men, who have spent their lives in these imaginary inquiries. But we must remark that such speculations tend to withdraw the mind from the simple truths of religion, that they foster the spirit

not of charity but of party, for which they seem to extract a warrant out of Scripture; lastly, that they tend to prevent our seeing the history of Christendom, as well as its present condition, in a true light, and therefore from understanding our relations to it.

But besides these imaginary alarms, there are real grounds of apprehension which cannot be dismissed in an instant. We are all observing the great changes which have taken place in religious opinion during the last forty years. They have followed two directions equally abhorrent to the sentiments of our fathers, Rome and Germany. One of these movements has found more favour among the clergy, the other among the laity. No attempts to suppress either of them have met with any success. They seem to be not peculiar to this country, but common to other countries, though taking somewhat different forms. Older persons are very unwilling to be reconciled to them; to the young, like other novelties, they soon become familiar. In many a Christian home they have been a source of misunderstanding and estrangement. I do not say that they are unimportant, far from it. Still the temper of alarm and exaggeration is not the right way of meeting them; and one or two remarks may perhaps enable us to see these movements more in their true proportions.

First, we observe that they are not simply caused by the activity of one or two great teachers. The

movements seem to carry away the teachers rather than to be led by them. They are not produced artificially, but arise naturally out of the age of the world in which we live, the age of criticism and inquiry, the age also which contains in itself the necessary reaction against the inquiry to which it has given birth. Formerly both in our own and in other branches of the Christian Church, the level both of thought and feeling was lower; mankind rested more in custom, and the disturbing influences were fewer. We need not say that we are better than our fathers or that our fathers were better than we are, but thus much we may say: that the quiet of those good old times and the restless inquiry and practical earnestness of our own day can hardly be combined in one.

But, secondly, we may note that the alarm excited by these new practices and opinions is partly the result of their novelty. When we become used to them they no longer outrage our feelings; and we more easily learn to dissociate them from the essence of religion. Twenty years ago pious persons were grievously offended when they heard that the world had existed during infinite ages, or that important texts were wanting in the oldest MS. of the New Testament, or that discrepancies occurred in the narratives of the Gospels. But now, what educated man troubles himself about difficulties of this sort? A similar remark may be made about the services

of our Church: who now objects to the wearing of a surplice, which in the days of our fathers, as of the Puritans, excited so bitter an opposition, or to the decoration of the Communion Table with flowers, or to many other customs which have been introduced within the memory of most of us, and seem to be quite as much of an æsthetical, as of a religious nature? Whether they be good or bad, it is clearly an advantage that we should cease to think much about them, because then they no longer distract us from the weightier matters of religion.

These changes are not unimportant, nor the differences which are symbolized by them slight, but neither are they so great as they appear. If others cannot see this and we can, it is our duty to mediate between ourselves and them, and to reconcile them one to another. It would be a very bad sign of latitudinarianism in religion, if the one thing in which it was wanting was that charity 'without which all our doings are nothing worth.' Two generations in the same family, two brothers or sisters in the same house, have gone the one to the right hand and the other to the left—this is not an uncommon experience of life—their religious opinions differ because their characters differ: we are not all cast in the same mould. Now what I think we should never cease to impress upon ourselves is, that where there is honesty and self-sacrifice and a love of truth, the matters in which we agree are far more important

than those in which we differ can ever be. Natural affection is a safer guide in such matters than the definitions of Doctors of the Church. We may observe in social life that there are some persons who have a singular power of attracting others to them by drawing out what is good in them. That is the temper in which to treat religious differences. Or in a higher strain of reflection we may take both ourselves and them into the presence of God, and anticipate in thought that united family of all Churches, nations, and languages, which shall one day appear before Him there.

Thus amid all the changes of religious opinion, and the theological discord which distracts the world, we may possess our souls in peace. But we must acknowledge the conditions of the age in which we live; we cannot roll back the tide of secular knowledge, nor can we confine religious movements to the limits in which we desire that they should work. And if sometimes our ears are dulled and our minds confused by the Babel of voices which dins around us, we may turn away from them, and listen only to that voice which speaks to us from within of truth and love, of righteousness and peace.

Lastly, let us apply the same principle to our own lives. The evils of life would be greatly diminished if we could see them as they truly are, and if when we have recognized their true nature we could cast them all upon God. The real troubles of life are

sometimes great and seem to be overwhelming for a time, but they are not to be compared with those which imagination conjures up. When we draw near to them they are almost always such as common prudence may overcome. As in a journey through the mountains, at a distance the rocks seem to enclose us, but when we come up to them an outlet appears; and the real difficulty is not in the misfortune itself which looks so terrible, the loss of fortune or friends, but in ourselves who are unequal to meet it. Why should we who for the most part are provided with the means of life be so fretful and anxious about the future? If we have prepared ourselves for the future, we shall find our place in it; if we are unprepared, no change of circumstances will be of any use to us. We are careful and anxious about many things which distract us from the better part. We need to see ourselves as we truly are in all our relations to God and our fellow-men. We need to carry into the whole of life that presence of mind which is required of the warrior—

Who in the hour of conflict keeps the law
In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw.

We need, above all, to recognize that our lives are not the sport of chance, but they have their deep foundation in the laws of nature and in the Will of God.

In sickness too, when we are hanging between life and death and physicians are watching over us

and noting the symptoms hour by hour, we can do nothing better than lie still and see the salvation of the Lord! Whether our prayer is 'O spare me a little that I may recover my strength,' or, 'Into Thy hands I commend my spirit,' we are ready to leave the event with God. It is our duty, if we can, to recover; and it is our best hope of recovery to be patient and to cast our burden upon the Lord. We must keep the mind above the body; and if during weary days and nights the very distractions of mind and body seem to be lost in a dull sense of pain and misery, still, beyond and above that, there may be some light shining upon us, some voice speaking to us from afar, some inward peace that cannot be shaken. I have known persons during the last year who would not have been alive now but for their wonderful patience and resignation in long and painful sickness. The time of illness may be the time in which we are apparently the most useless, and yet may be a time in which our own character undergoes the greatest change. And the memory of some illnesses have been, not only in the mind of the sufferer but of others who have been the witnesses of them, the best recollection of their lives, the image of Christ crucified brought home to them in the face of a child, or of a parent, to which they have turned again and again in times of sorrow and temptation. There is no nobler spirit in which we can meet death than that of an eminent

servant of Christ (Edward Irving), who, when his physicians told him that he was ill of a mortal disease, while his friends were hoping and believing that his valued life had been granted to their prayers, said only, 'Whether we live we live unto the Lord, or whether we die we die unto the Lord.'

And now I shall sum up the meaning which I have imperfectly sought to convey in words which have been the comfort of many:—

'The hills stand round about Jerusalem; even so standeth the Lord round about them that fear Him.'

'Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I will yet praise Him who is the health of my countenance and my God.'

'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.'

'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters.'

'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.'

VII

¹ *THE WORDS THAT I SPEAK UNTO YOU, THEY ARE
SPIRIT AND THEY ARE LIFE.*

JOHN vi. 63.

IT is difficult to determine the exact relation in which the spirit of Scripture stands to the history or narrative. But there is no difficulty in seeing that the love of God and the spirit of Christ are gifts and graces of a far higher sort than any belief in facts, whether natural or supernatural, and are far more intimately connected with the religious life of the soul. For the record of facts is necessarily of a passing and evanescent character ; they fade away into the distance, and are very imperfectly conceived by us at the end of one or two thousand years. Words are not so fresh and living as they were when first spoken or written down ; questions arise about them to which they give no answer, and after the lapse of centuries they may often be taken in different senses. But the spirit of Christ is the same always ; the spirit of justice and mercy, of truth and love, the spirit in which a man lives for others and not for himself. These are the elements of religious life which he who

¹ Preached at Balliol, May 26, 1878.

wills may find within his own heart. Like the light they have a self-evidencing quality and need no other witness. They do not fade away as time goes on ; no theological or metaphysical skill is required to understand them, nor is the meaning of them liable to be imperilled in their passage from one language to another. The simple ideas of truth and right and the life which conforms to them are beyond the power of criticism to assail or disturb.

And therefore we have reason to be thankful that the Christian religion is a spirit and not a letter, inward and not outward, moral and not historical. Thus it becomes akin to goodness and truth everywhere, and is parted from them only by an imaginary line. But mankind in all ages have been tending to invert this ; they have been putting that which is outward and historical in the place of what is inward and spiritual. Thus there are some persons who believe that the Christian religion can only rest safely on the witness of miracles. It is not the teaching of Christ, or the mind or life of Christ, or the progressive revelation of God in the Old and New Testament and in the religions of the world, or their own immediate consciousness of Divine truth, which affect them half as much as the power which Christ and His Apostles are declared to have possessed of working miracles. Forgetting that uncertainty must always in some degree attach to the testimony of ancient and fragmentary writings at the distance of

many centuries; forgetting that the evidences to which they appeal are possessed by other religions, and that the most corrupt forms of Christianity are most ready to make use of them; not considering that the very meaning of the word is altered in modern times by the distinct recognition of laws of nature, and that the question is simply one of evidence and has nothing to do with the Christian life; they are willing to take Christianity off its eternal and immutable basis and to place it on an insecure and artificial one. And if they happen to meet with the objections which are often urged in the present day against the evidence of prophecy or of miracles, the fabric of their belief comes tottering down, and their minds grow darkened and confused. But the language of Scripture is of another kind from this. Christ is not saying to us, either now or when he was on earth, 'Except ye see signs and wonders and preserve the recollection of them in after times, ye can have no sure ground of belief'; but, 'Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe.' He is rebuking those who imagine that His mission is to be proved by signs and wonders. Or as He says in the text, at the same time uttering a sort of cry over the wilfulness (or shall I say the stupidity) of mankind, 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are truth.' As if he said: 'Do understand what I mean; not the letter, not the figure, not all that succeeding ages have fancied that they saw

in those words, flesh and blood,' but, 'I in them and Thou in Me, that they all may be made perfect in one.' And, therefore, my brethren, I shall not say much of the 'signs and wonders' which are believed to have accompanied the first preaching of the Gospel as on this day, because that aspect of the subject is not of very great importance to us; and because the nature of the miracle is not quite clear in the narrative of the Acts; and no light is thrown upon it either by other passages of Scripture or by Ecclesiastical History.

Leaving this, I propose to consider the festival of Pentecost, the old Jewish festival of thanksgiving for the harvest, in a wider manner as the figure of that greater harvest into which the whole civilized world has been gathered; an ingathering which is pre-figured with reference to its internal workings, by the image of leaven gradually leavening the whole lump; so that the small rudimentary Church which met with closed doors in an upper room, of which the names were reckoned together at about 120, is now counted by hundreds of millions. On this day I think that we may naturally meditate on the spirit of Christianity, not merely as exhibited among the first disciples, but as diffused throughout the world, one and continuous, bound together by many outward links and having many differences of government and history, and yet preserving the Christian consciousness of the same spirit, the same life, the same Head. And first I will say something of the drawbacks which have hindered

the spread of Christianity over the world, and the want of power which it shows even in Christian countries; and will proceed to inquire how far and in what sense the religion of Christ may be said to be a failure, if I may use such an expression, and what are the causes of this. And, secondly, I will speak of the hopes of the future, and consider whether there be any ground for thinking that the religion of Christ may still have a mission of glad tidings for the Church and the world; whether, in the figurative words of the prophets, it be probable or conceivable, 'That the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth as the waters cover the sea'; or whether, as some persons tell us, the bounds of Christianity are already fixed, and the spirit of the day of Pentecost has evaporated or been extinguished. Thirdly, I will speak of the revivals of the Christian religion which have taken place from time to time, or are taking place in our own day, of the tests by which they are to be judged, and of the relation in which they stand to the true progress of the Gospel.

(1) When we look back upon the past history of Christianity, we are struck by the fact that the spread of the Christian religion has been in former ages precarious and uncertain; for the first three centuries in antagonism to the power of the Roman Empire, and then again with the world on its side, employing the weapons of force rather than persuasion in the conversion of the barbarians, subject generally to the

will of princes though sometimes rising up against them, dependent on the accidents of persons, affinities of race, the course of secular events. We might have imagined that the revelation of the love of God to His children would have at once ravished the hearts of the human race, and that all men everywhere would have recognized at once that peace was better than war, union than division; the light and easy yoke of the service of Christ better than the tyranny of a dark and cruel superstition. We might have imagined that the spirit of Christ would have shone forth in its purity, that what men surely believed they would inevitably have practised, and that at least, when they were ready to call down fire from heaven on their opponents, they would have given proof of their belief by doing the works. We might have thought that good men would not have been found out of the same mouth giving praises and thanksgiving to God, and invoking curses on those who were not of the same sect or party or opinion with them, yet equally with themselves the creatures of His love. We might have expected that the spirit of Christ who said 'Forbid them not' would have animated His followers. But history and experience tell a different tale.

For the truth is that in human nature good and evil are closely connected together, and the corruption of the best is often the worst. Even union may easily become a source of division. A body of men organize themselves with the view of carrying out some great

and good purpose : there is nothing wrong in this ; but see what is most likely to happen. The new body is almost necessarily in antagonism to those who are just outside them ; the spirit which draws them towards one another is apt to alienate them from the rest of the world. This is the danger against which Christ means to guard us in the parable of the Wheat and the Tares : ' Let both grow together : ' as if He would say, ' Do not attempt to distinguish people by outward marks, do not divide a congregation of Christians (this congregation or any other) according to their standard of Churchmanship, or orthodoxy, or devotion of life. Those judgments of people belong to God only.' This is the reason why the boundaries of Churches should be made as wide as possible and the passage from one to the other as easy as possible, lest, peradventure, we should stereotype some ancient enmity of centuries ago, or consecrate with a religious name some scheme of earthly ambition. Does anybody think it a good thing that this country should be divided into two nearly equal parts, feeling more acutely their antagonism to one another than their common relation to Christ ? When men have persuaded themselves (perhaps on the ground that they alone have the true form of Church Government, whether Episcopal, or Presbyterian, or Independent) that their Church is exclusively the Church of God, then, instead of learning, like their Father Who is in heaven, to embrace all other men in the arms of their

love, their affections become narrowed and fixed on persons of their own sect ; those who agree with them they call good, those who disagree with them evil ; they concentrate their minds on some notion, some power, some practice, which they desire to maintain or exercise ; they will even make God the author of their fancies and assume a Divine authority for some minute point of doctrine, some trifle of ritual, some external form, some ancient metaphysical subtlety, forgetting that the sum of real religion must ever be 'to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.' This is a page, or rather many pages, in the history of the Christian Church, and suggests one reason why Christianity has failed so much in carrying out its objects, because the spirit of party has taken the place of the spirit of Christ—the spirit of violence and persecution in former ages which has dwindled into the spirit of enmity and dislike and detraction in our own.

Again, there is another reason—the worldliness of professing Christians. Instead of Christianity converting the world, the world has in part converted Christianity. The victory of arms, the triumphs of ambition, the weapons of policy and craft, have taken the place of that other victory which is spiritual. Kings and prelates have been nominally Christian, but they have been really aiming in the name of Christ at earthly power and aggrandisement. It has been so very palpable that when they were speaking of

another life they were really thinking about this. And without going to history for examples we may observe the same thing in our daily life and among our neighbours, and then hold up the glass to ourselves. All the doubts of sceptics are as nothing, or as very little, compared with the great doubt which arises in men's minds from the ways of Christians themselves, saying one thing and doing another. Could such an one have had any real belief in the religion which he professes, though he may have been a regular attendant of some Chapel or Church, who all his life long went on heaping up riches and never thought seriously of doing good to any one but himself and his family? Men can hardly say that the religion of Christ has failed until they have practised it a little more. And so of ourselves. Do the lives of most of us make any approach to what we all know and admit to be right? Are we, I will not say, taking up the cross and following Christ—for that may be thought beyond the present age—but are we doing much for any one but ourselves? Can we wonder that Christianity should be hollow and conventional when our lives are hollow and conventional? The evil of which we complain is within us. This, then, is a second reason of what I have ventured to term the apparent failure of the Christian religion—the worldliness of professing Christians.

I will mention one other reason without professing to exhaust them all. [A great historian has arranged

under several heads the causes of the success of Christianity: I am trying to give some of the causes of its want of success both in our own and other ages.] It is this, that Christians have not taken the right means to their end; they have not claimed, as Christ would have done, the good everywhere as their own; they have too often been at war with the progress of knowledge, which is the greatest power in this world and the best friend of moral improvement; they have looked with suspicion on speculations and inquiries about the laws of nature and of past history; they have been lovers of goodness, gentleness, purity, self-devotion, but they have not been equally lovers of truth and justice. They have drawn lines between secular and religious life, and sometimes even seem to have imagined that they could be pleasing to God without morality. Christian teachers can hardly be said to have understood the nature of man or the world in which God has placed him; they have not seen how much he was the child of circumstances, and must necessarily depend even in his moral nature (for body and soul are strangely intertwined) on the air which he breathed, on the water which he drank, on the house in which he abode, on the employment in which his life was passed. They seem to have thought that his superiors and the ministers of religion had hardly any duties towards him but directly religious ones. This division of secular and religious,

of physical and moral; this opposition of science and revelation, and even of one class of virtues to another, suggests a third reason why in the nineteenth century Christianity is so backward; why, as some persons have said, 'Infidelity is in a more hopeful condition than formerly.'

And yet, with all these errors and drawbacks, it would be an error to suppose that the religion of Christ has not greatly leavened and altered the world, both in its temper and character, as well as in many of its customs and institutions. Is there not a gentler and more humane feeling among men? A greater tenderness for the weak, the poor, the suffering, the young? Is there not a higher standard of morality and purity? A greater elevation of man above his merely physical and animal nature? Have we not had examples of saints and martyrs and other devoted persons whose lives seem to widen and exalt human nature, and to give us a higher notion of man than we could have received from the old Gentile civilization? Are there not inestimable social blessings which have flowed from Christianity, even in her mixed and adulterated state, such, for example, as the emancipation of the serfs in earlier European history or the emancipation of the negro within the memory of many of us? The greater sacredness of the marriage tie may be attributed to the same cause. Shall we forget that the Church of Christ has been in former ages a refuge and a sanctuary from barbarous

and lawless men? Shall we not remember that amid all the darkness and confusion of the world the Scriptures of the Prophets and of the New Testament have been preserved to us, and that many words of Christ Himself have been handed down to us, and of that fountain of truth and light we still drink? Therefore I say that Christianity (although we see her, not like a bride descending from heaven, but overgrown with the weeds of earth, partaking of the mixed character of all human things) has not failed of her purpose, but men have dishonoured her and married her to their own ambitious desires and interests. And, as a good man may truly say that the evil which is in him comes from himself and the good from the grace of God, so may we say as Christians that the good in the Christian Church is the outpouring of the Spirit of God, and that the evil is due to the follies and fantasies of men.

(2) And now we will turn to the second division of the subject—the hopes of the future—and ask the question whether the growth of Christianity will always equally be retarded by the same causes and will always equally fall short of the intention of Christ, ever aspiring, ever failing, by the very nature of man ; or whether, notwithstanding some appearances to the contrary, the next generation or some other may not have clearer convictions of religious truth than we or our fathers have had. In such an inquiry we

must be careful of putting names in the place of things. We are not speaking of outward Christianity or of the outward Christian, but of him of whom St. Peter said, 'Whosoever worketh righteousness is accepted of Him'; of whom Christ saith, 'He that giveth a cup of cold water in My name shall in no wise lose his reward.' We may put the question in a more general form—is there any hope of the world through the influence of the Christian religion or by any other means becoming better? Hope is a Christian virtue, like faith, and may be called the attitude of cheerfulness towards God and towards human life. Of course our hopes about this or that event taking place are not in themselves any proof that what we desire will happen. Still we may see grounds for our hopes in the changing circumstances of the Church and of the world. Many persons, as you know, have died in the belief that within their own lifetime they would witness the second coming of Christ. Others have thought that the greatest blessing and good which God could confer upon the world would be the union of the Greek, Roman, and Anglican Churches in one body; they would then be able to call down fire from heaven on their opponents to some purpose. I see no reason for thinking that either of these millenniums are likely to take place in the nineteenth century; nothing in what we see around us would lead us to expect it. The signs of the future, to which I propose to call your attention, are of a more commonplace and

less startling kind, yet of a kind more in accordance with the words of Christ, 'The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there.'

The first thing that I shall notice is that there is not so much party spirit as formerly. Men are beginning to get tired of it, and the world is rising up and protesting against the violence of the Churches. That the governments of Europe do not altogether allow them to do as they please is not to be regarded as a mark of degradation which is imposed upon Christ and His servants, but as a very great blessing to themselves and others. It might be otherwise if you could suppose a Church animated solely by the love of goodness and truth and absolutely devoid of every worldly and interested motive. But such a kingdom of heaven cannot exist upon earth. And therefore it is good for people themselves that they should not be allowed to do all that they would like to do. If in former ages, and also in our own, the Church may be truly said to have been 'a school-master to the world to bring men to Christ,' there are also some lessons which the world has taught the Church, some truths of common sense and practical life which the laity have seen more clearly than the clergy. Christians are beginning to think of themselves more as they are in the sight of God, and less with reference to those envious lines of demarcation or external notes of difference which intersect Christian

countries. And, as St. Paul when he was led by the spirit of God to the conclusion, 'There is neither Greek nor Jew, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus,' was led also to the other conclusion, that they could only be united to God and to one another by an internal principle, so in our own day, in this chaos of religious opinions in which we sometimes seem to live, men are beginning to feel as they put aside outward differences that nothing but a change of life and heart can make us acceptable to God. 'True religion and undefiled before God and the Father is to visit the fatherless and widow, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.' True religion and undefiled, if I may be allowed to put the language of St. James into more modern phraseology, is integrity, disinterestedness, simplicity, the service of man for the love of God.

And besides this tendency which I think we may observe in the present day to receive the faith of Christ more naturally and simply, more as a rule of duty which a father gives his children about which there cannot be much mistake (although there may be great difficulty in bringing their wayward wills into conformity with His will); besides this I think that we may notice also that there is a greater knowledge of human nature, that is, of ourselves, among us than formerly. We know better what we are and how the constitution of man must be treated, sometimes morally, sometimes physically; we have more power over cir-

cumstances than formerly, and better understand that man is the child of circumstances. And although we have made but little progress as yet in that first of Christian duties, the removal of the evils of our great towns (without which there certainly never can be the beginning of a millennium in this world), still we are now aware of the evil of which our fathers were unconscious, and may hope to see steady and continuous attempts made to find a remedy. A Christian man will hardly go into the lanes and alleys of London or of any of our large manufacturing towns, and look upon the sallow, miserable, overcrowded, stunted beings who come peeping out of their dens into the sunshine on a holiday or Sunday, and not feel pained and grieved and ashamed and in some degree guilty at the thought that human nature should be so degraded in a Christian country. This, again, appears to be a hopeful sign of the future. Almost everything has to be done, but there is the sense that it ought to be done. Let experience shine upon the light of the Gospel and the light of the Gospel upon experience, and then we shall no more have such absurdities as the attempt to do good to men's souls while we neglect their bodies, or the attempt to relieve their physical wants by modes which only increase their moral degradation.

Once more: I have spoken above of the antagonism of science and revelation, which has no doubt a great effect in alienating the minds of thoughtful and edu-

cated men from the faith of Christ. But is this antagonism to continue for ever? It may be very natural that the new and the old should quarrel a little; we are going through a period of transition and have not yet settled down in our right places. (Do not let us imagine that this period of transition, or 'the strange times we live in,' as other persons express themselves, can ever be the smallest possible excuse for violating any particular of our duty to God and man, which is written like a sunbeam and plain as the sun in the heavens.) But is not this antagonism also beginning to pass away? For no man of sense can ever imagine that the enquiry into truth can be displeasing to the God of truth, even if carried to the utmost in a reverent and earnest spirit—even if, like the patriarch of old, it seems to be going out on a voyage of discovery, not knowing whither it goes. No Christian teacher will go to a man of science and say to him, 'Come and be the follower of Christ, but you must give up astronomy, you must believe that the sun goes round the earth; you must give up geology and go back the old four thousand years before Christ; you must cease to enquire into the material causes which affect the human mind.' No one will go to the scholar and say, 'Come to Christ, but first give up enquiries about His life and the origin of the Gospels'; or to the historian, 'Come to Christ, but take only that view of the facts of history which the Church approves.' No man of sense will say this to

another (and indeed what sort of notion could he have of a God who required this?) And we may even go a step further and say that the progress of science and knowledge (although this too, owing to the disproportion of the parts of knowledge, may have a temporary evil effect) has been an aid and support of the religion of Christ, and is gradually becoming incorporated with it, and more than any other cause has tended to purify it from narrowing and hurtful superstitions, which we easily recognize in other religions or in other forms of the Christian religion, not so easily in our own. Therefore I say that this opposition is already melting away and becoming a matter of names; and that Christianity is in this respect not in a worse, but in a better position than formerly, because no longer wasting her energies on a fruitless struggle, but seeking to embrace all men and the good and truth in all things within the limits of the Gospel of Christ.

So I think we may see some elements of hope and life, as well as of discouragement, in the present state of the world and of the Church. If we discard names, and look a little more into the nature of things, we shall scarcely find that upon the whole Christianity is in a worse position than formerly, though many things that once seemed unchristian may now be deemed Christian, and many things that were once deemed Christian may in our own day seem at variance with the spirit of Christ.

And now (3) leaving the question of the past and of the future of Christianity, I may on this day not inappropriately draw your attention to the revivals of Christianity which have taken place from time to time in this or other ages, as at the Protestant Reformation, or the counter-Reformation among Roman Catholics, or in the aftergrowth of Puritanism in the time of the Commonwealth, or at the foundation of Wesleyanism among ourselves. The narratives of these movements are among the most curious portions of history, and I need hardly say that there are circumstances which give them a peculiar interest at the present moment. Those who are not fitted either by character or antecedents to take part in them, may yet have a friendly sympathy with them, and be willing to bid them God speed. There are two or three reflections which naturally arise in our minds when we contemplate them. First, they serve to show us the natural strength of the religious principle in the soul, which, at the very moment when some persons are telling us that Christianity is about to die out and leave the earth, breaks forth with a renewed power. Secondly, they indicate a want which hitherto the regular forms of religion have failed to meet. Thirdly, we see that they are transient and emotional; they come and go; they sometimes partake almost of the nature of a physical affection. And the great object of those who guide them should be to make that permanent which

is in its nature transient, to add the conviction of reason to emotion; to raise the physical which is in them to the spiritual; to insist above all on the one true test of conversion, 'Cease to do evil, learn to do well.'

These movements ought not to be ridiculed or sneered at by persons of education though there may be ridiculous circumstances connected with them. They seem to touch masses whom we are unable to reach, and the mere fact that they have brought or seemed to bring words of life and comfort to poor creatures who never heard them before, should exempt them from ridicule. We cannot expect all persons to receive the Gospel in the same quiet, rational manner. Do you suppose that the poor and uneducated, the serving man in a low employment, the colliers whom Wesley describes, as he saw them, with the tears chasing the soot from their faces, can be taught the Gospel exactly in the same way that we are? I will put a case which seems to me truly, though imperfectly, to describe the matter:—Human love, too, has a ridiculous side, and yet is one of the most sacred of human things; and it may perhaps be the better for having its weaknesses laughed at, if we do not also learn to sneer at its real value and importance. Now I think that we can easily imagine, or rather that we may daily see, that a young man under the influence of such feelings, if he have any worthy notion of the meaning of

love, will find it much easier to leave off bad habits, such as drinking or any other vice, and then, if at any time of his life, he will desire with his whole soul for the sake of another that he may be a good man. Even so, when the love of God and Christ is diffused in the soul of a man, he finds it easier to get above himself, to live for others, to conquer his merely animal nature. And, though there may be a good deal of illusion accompanying such feelings, of which those who are subject to them should be aware, yet, if we get rid of the illusion and fix the good, they may also be the beginnings of a higher life in us, which will last when the revival has passed away. Such a movement passed over the Church of England in the first thirty years of this century, and has been succeeded, as you know, by another movement of a different and in some respects opposite character; by another and another and another. We who are now living can hardly judge of them impartially, because we are under the influence of them and we cannot know their future consequences. But what will posterity say of them? They will observe that, like other religious movements, they had their time of growth and decline, and that after they had passed away they left a state of exhaustion and perhaps of reaction. The same cannot repeat itself in the same form, but weaker and weaker. They would remark, probably, that much more in them than we are able to detect is really a survival

of the past. They will judge them in that point of view from which they are least likely to judge of themselves—by a political and moral standard. Did they raise the tone of society? Did they increase mutual confidence? Did they diminish drinking? Did they find the people uneducated and leave them educated? Was the voice of their supporters lifted up in the cause of justice and humanity, when no party interest seemed to be at stake? Have they tended after all to elevate or to lower the moral sentiments of mankind, e.g. to increase the love of truth or the power of superstition and self-deception? Did they divide or unite the world? Did they leave the minds of men clearer and more enlightened, or did they add another element of confusion to the chaos? Did they, seeing the difficulties in which religious belief is temporarily involved, drive men back from reason and history to take refuge in the emotions? These are the principles by which they must be judged at the bar of history and before the judgment-seat of God. These are the tests which we must apply to them and to our own lives also. No final assurance or intensity of inward conviction can take the place of them. However sure we may be, we cannot be sure that we are not mistaken unless our faith is indissolubly bound up with truth and right and the well-being of mankind.

I have detained you too long in speaking of subjects which have been too much compressed.

Yet before I conclude let me sum up what I have been saying under the figure of an individual life.

A man may look back upon his own past history in later years and see how he has been guided by the providence of God in childhood, in youth, in manhood; he may remark how he erred from ignorance and want of experience; what great mistakes he made; how often by accident he was kept out of harm's way; how many of his own actions he now deeply condemns; he will perhaps think how much more he might have effected if he could have always seen things as he now sees them. And if he be a brave and energetic man he will not give up the rest of life as hopeless, but he will stand on the past and look forward to the future. He will not say to himself, 'I can never have again a first love or a springtime of life.' But at forty or fifty, or sixty or seventy years of age he will feel himself to be beginning still and have a good hope in him that the last years of his life will be happier and more useful and more energetic than his earlier years, not to be counted mournfully as they pass away one by one, but to be made more of because there are fewer of them. The chief ground of his hope will be that he knows himself better and knows other men better; if he has not the loves of his youth he has not the quarrels of his youth, nor does he mistake his friends for his enemies. He has learned to recognize the really

important things of life and to set aside the lesser. And so he goes on in peace to his end.

Even so the Church of Christ may be now only in the middle of her course, and may yet be destined to exist for a thousand, for two thousand, or for many thousand years, through endless changes in human things, and changes in herself also. And, although she may have lost something of her first love, she may have also attained a deeper and calmer wisdom. In looking back on her own vicissitudes she has the same kind of retrospect as the individual—of great errors and great faults, of friends mistaken for enemies and enemies for friends, of passions assuming the form of virtues; and yet withal she has a sense of the Providence of God watching over her and the angel of His Presence covering her. Only by degrees has she arrived at the knowledge of her true self; only by degrees has she learned to cast the light of experience on the words of Christ. There is still a good hope, though not in the sense sometimes expected by missionary efforts, that Christianity may become a universal religion. Hitherto she has been ‘a house divided against herself’; now she is beginning to see that with many apparent differences, there is a deeper underlying unity which is drawing men’s hearts together and under many names bringing them to Christ. And so, with a deeper knowledge of human nature and a deeper insight into the purposes of God, she goes forth in another and wider

spirit, acknowledging the good and truth everywhere, even among those who are not called by His name, acknowledging the presence of Christ everywhere, to meet the wants of men, to heal their religious differences, to alleviate their physical necessities; not to unite as many as can be got together under the banner of Christ as though he were some leader of a party or of an army, but through Him to bring back all sects, nations, languages, to one another and to God.

VIII

¹ REJOICE, O YOUNG MAN, IN THY YOUTH; AND LET THY HEART CHEER THEE IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH, AND WALK IN THE WAYS OF THY HEART, AND IN THE SIGHT OF THINE EYES; BUT KNOW THAT FOR ALL THESE THINGS GOD WILL BRING THEE INTO JUDGMENT.

ECCLES. xi. 9, 10.

THE book of Ecclesiastes is the saddest and strangest book of Scripture. We wonder how the author of it could have retained his faith in God and in righteousness; for he makes no attempt to justify the ways of God to man; he does not seek to reconcile the picture of human life which he draws with any higher purpose or design. He sees everywhere the vanity of the world, the nearness of the grave, the indifference of all earthly things. He reflects upon the sameness of nature, upon the sameness of human life, upon the common lot of wise and foolish. He tries pleasure, he tries wisdom; but, though wisdom is superior to folly, both are alike hushed in death. He warns us against the uselessness of heaping up riches, or of

¹ A University Sermon preached at St. Mary's, Oxford. February 5, 1882.

making many books. He considers all the oppressions which are done under the sun, and scarcely seems to find a trace of a divine Providence guiding the world. He takes a sort of mournful interest in the scene which he is surveying, so transient to each individual, so permanent, and almost monotonous, if the long series of generations is considered. The order of the world is fated, and man is hurried away in the stream, having a dream-like consciousness of his own existence. Upon the whole, after contemplating as from a throne, in the person of the great King of Jerusalem, the multitude of human occupations which lie beneath him, the author is inclined to think that there is nothing better upon the face of the earth than quiet and innocent enjoyment, although this, too, is cut short in death. 'Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of thy vanity.' This is the best which earth has to give.

Yet, along with this despairing note, answering sadly to thoughts which sometimes beset men's hearts in other ages and countries, is heard another voice, which is the expression of the truth and righteousness of God. If the aims of men in general are not worth pursuing, if life is short, if pleasure and wisdom alike make themselves wings and fly away, what is the conclusion? Not 'let us drink and eat, for to-morrow we die'; let us build houses, and plant vineyards and gardens; let us make the most of our brief term of existence; but 'let us fear God, and keep His

commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.' If old age will soon overtake us, 'remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth'; if the grave is shortly to close upon us, 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.' There is no time to be lost in the few years which remain to us; out of the vanity and misery of human life the Preacher extracts the lesson of duty. There is no promise of reward, or hope of present or future happiness; amid all this worldly wisdom and endless experience the one truth which remains unshaken is the eternity and righteousness of God: 'God will bring all things into judgment,' and 'I know that whatsoever God doeth it will be for ever.'

So strangely and discordantly do the two voices sound in our ears—the one the voice of the man of the world, passing in review the occupations and interests of men; the other, the deeper note which is heard at intervals, reaffirming the truth and righteousness of God. No attempt is made to harmonize them, though towards the end of the book the more serious tone prevails. 'Man dieth as the beast dieth,' and yet, 'God shall call every work into judgment, whether it be good or bad.' Man dieth, or seems to die, as the beast dieth, but the spirit shall return to God, who gave it. We are fairly puzzled by the opposite points of view which the writer lays before us. Is he a believer or an unbeliever?—a Hebrew Stoic or Epicurean, or both, in his feeling? Some-

thing, perhaps, is to be allowed for the Hebrew style, which in the book of Ecclesiastes, as of Job, seems unequal to the expression of connected thought. Had the author possessed the famous art of dialectics, the conclusion of the whole matter might have followed more logically from the premises. He might have shown us in what sense the world was vanity; in what sense it contained the hope or seed of a future life. Still, we cannot doubt that the mind of the writer himself is alternating between darkness and light; and that, whereas his first thoughts are, 'All is vanity and monotony,' his second thoughts are, 'Let us fear God and keep His commandments.'

We may understand his position better if we transfer him to our own time and country. For there have been persons in all ages who doubt and believe at once, to whom the world seems dark and dreary, the sport of chance and fate, who, nevertheless, have not laid aside their faith in God and immortality. There are two opposite sides in their own character, which are always receiving opposite impressions, so that the one half of them seems to say 'No' to the other half. Often they have an eye to see only the evil and misery of the world. Life appears so short, so poor, so uninteresting to them. Such persons living in the nineteenth century might still repeat the text of the Preacher, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.' When they see the many oppressions, and the little improvement of the world, they might

think that the poor cried in vain to God. They would not observe how many of the ills of life are in our own power to make or cure. They would not like to acknowledge how many things had actually improved. They would take a pessimist view of their own age and country, of their own profession or University. And, perhaps, the more nearly things touched them, the worse they would seem to be. They would remark how one theory or practice succeeds another, in medicine, in law, in theology, and philosophy; how each generation believes itself to be everything, and is nothing; how in the drama of human affairs the same passions prevail, the same treatment of individuals is repeated again and again, 'the race is not to the swift'—meaning, perhaps, themselves, and 'there is nothing new under the sun.' They would remark that great public benefactors soon passed out of remembrance—'There was a poor man who, by his wisdom, saved a city, but no man remembered that same poor man.' They would tell us that in all the dreary waste of fashion and money-making there are few things better in England than our quiet family life. Observing the rapidity with which popular religious movements succeed one another (which cannot be all true, and yet all equally claim a divine authority), they would counsel moderation in religion—'Be not righteous overmuch, and be not wicked overmuch.' As an aged man of the world, whose recollections went back into the last century, reviewing his own

experiences of life, is reported to have said, 'When I was young nobody was religious, now that I am old everybody is religious; and they are *both* wrong.'

I have given a few illustrations of the habit of mind which is pictured to us in the Book of Ecclesiastes. It would be called in modern language scepticism, and is the outpouring of a melancholy which has pondered deeply on human life. You may say with truth that it is exaggerated, and that the opposite of many things said by the Preacher would have been at least equally true. To the aphorism that 'nothing is new under the sun,' we may add another aphorism that 'everything is new under the sun.' For history never repeats itself in the same manner, but always with a difference. Against the other saying, 'Be not righteous overmuch,' we may set the words of the Gospel, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.' Some of the language of the Preacher we may refute, if I may say so, out of his own mouth. 'Enjoy—do not enjoy.' Wisdom, too, is vanity, and yet wisdom exceeds folly as light exceeds darkness. The truth is, that the character which I have been describing is singular and inconsistent. It is not proposed for our imitation, and yet has some points worthy of imitation. Such an one is ready to die in faith, and yet he hardly sees the light beyond. He does not pretend to reconcile the appearances of the world with a divine Providence; rather, he seems

to believe that human things will go on much as they are to the end of time. Yet he is confident that God is righteous, and that somehow, he cannot tell how, somewhere, he cannot tell where, he will call every work into judgment. The first principles of right and truth are inseparably bound up with him; they are the anchor of his life—the only human interest of which he will not say, ‘This also is vanity.’ He shows us that the dreamy scepticism does not overspread all, but that the firmest faith is reconcilable with the slenderest knowledge of the ways of God to man.

And now leaving each one to gather what he can from this singular book, which may have an affinity to his own character, I will return to the simple words of the text, ‘Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.’ These words I propose to consider under two heads: first, the blessedness of youth; secondly, the responsibilities of youth.

We hardly think of the blessedness of youth until we look back upon it in after years. Most of those who are here present are young now; in ten years’ time they will be no longer young, but will have gone their ways to the business of life, some to failure and disappointment, others to new hopes and new fields of energy and usefulness. No young man can make

the reflections in youth which he will do when he is old. Of its full value he is hardly aware, until it has passed away. Looking back, it seems such a happy and gracious time, when the world was all before us, and we had visions of what we would do and be—of success at the bar, of usefulness in the Church, of accomplishing some great good to ourselves and others. The memory easily goes back to our first school or university distinctions, which, perhaps, gladdened a family, and may sometimes have been a light and comfort in a great trouble. Some of us too may have felt keenly the pleasures of acquiring knowledge, when each new study opened new interests to us, and we grew by what we learned. Happier still if our characters grew in proportion; if with the increase of knowledge came increased strength of will and right principle; and at the end of our university course we were better men, and better fitted for the purposes of life. And I must not forget to speak of our amusements. First, there was the joy of health and exercise: ‘when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest.’ We wandered over hill and plain in pleasant companionship, now trying feats of strength and skill, enduring hardness too, which gave a zest to our enjoyment. We had no aches or pains; there seemed to be no limit to our health and strength. Many of us remember the first delightful impression of a foreign country; of the snow-peaked mountains

rising out of the pines; of lakes and seas in some southern clime, surrounded by a landscape like the garden of Eden, beneath the blue and cloudless sky. And we have returned home from foreign travel, to find a charm and variety in our native land which the fairest scenes of earth hardly seem to possess. If we have eyes to see, we cannot come back to this place without being struck by its beauty, of which we shall scarcely find the like elsewhere, though our sense of it be dulled a little by familiarity. And not only ancient buildings and picturesque scenes have an interest for us, but nature in every form, whether adorned by the hand of man, or left in her own wildness, seems to touch us with the feeling of herself. She has a response to every mood of our own minds; her peacefulness will sometimes soothe the aching heart which cannot speak to others; the songs and sounds of a May morning echo our joy as we rise, full of hope, to perform our daily task; the melancholy of autumn, too, speaks to us not unpleasantly of something in human life. Amid the stormy winds on the sea-shore we feel ourselves inspired with a new sense of power and freedom. And besides this vague sympathy with nature, we may find definite interests in some class of natural objects, 'sermons in stones,' if in youth we are careful to store our minds with the elementary knowledge which will tell us 'what to observe.' For nothing to which we are unable to give a name has any place in memory; and when

there is no knowledge there is no higher kind of interest. And so the fairest and most curious things in the world pass almost unheeded before our eyes; and some of the best and purest pleasures of life are lost to us.

When we look back in later years to the days of old we remember another blessing which youth has more than any other time of life—the blessing of friendship and mutual society. A young man was not meant to be alone, but to rejoice with his fellows; to have common pursuits and amusements. He is naturally drawn to others and they to him. He finds them like himself, and makes friends of them—who, if he is of a loyal and constant temper, will continue his friends through life. Friends speak to one another of the different scenes in which they have lived—of their future hopes and prospects; one has greater knowledge of the world, another of books, and they mutually delight and instruct one another. They talk together of politics, of religion, of ideals of Church and State—not, perhaps, destined to be realized. But whether they are realized or not in the outward world, they may realize them in their own lives, and it is better to have had them and be disappointed in them, than never to have had them at all; or they meet for some purpose of study, to read a favourite author, to debate a disputed thesis, to arrange some business. To many the walks about this place are full of recollections of conversations

which they have had with friends, leaving an indelible impression on the mind. Here we held an argument with one whom we have not seen for thirty years; there again a remark was made to us which unconsciously to the speaker had a great effect on our life and character. And many a merry and characteristic jest, and many a festive scene, perhaps, not without some natural exaggeration, is recalled to our minds when we meet an old acquaintance, and repeat the thrice-told tale. And some sadder thoughts also occur to us. There have been remarkable men taken away before their time, of whom we vainly ask 'where would they have been if they had been living now?' 'Such an one was almost the only person who ever tried to do me any good, and he is now silent in his grave.' We feel it a blessing to have known such men; their memory keeps alive in us a higher type of life, above the ordinary current of opinion or of society. One or two such men are all that we can hope to have in any college. But even one or two such may in their own sphere mould a generation. They may create intellectual interests, they may foster public spirit, they may set a higher standard of morals and manners. Their energy may inspire energy in others; their sympathy and power of feeling with others may be a centre of friendship, of kindness, of good will. They may feel, though young, that they owe a duty to society, and that they do not meet together merely for their own pleasure. And some-

times, when they see another friendless, or isolated, they will draw him back again into the world, and endeavour to remedy the evils which false pride or over-sensitiveness may have occasioned.

The four years which we spend at the University are generally the most important, as they may be the happiest, of our lives. Long afterwards they stand out from the rest, for the memory of our own youth is associated with them ; we have more to tell of them, and they have a deeper hold on our minds. Here we meet for the first time on a common stage, before we part company again in our several pursuits. Here we first become our own masters, more free to think and to act than we ever were before. Here we find a great variety of characters, and are introduced to all classes and opinions. There is nothing narrow or exclusive in the life of this place. The rich man is not esteemed for his riches, and the poor man receives a generous welcome. Every one who has any natural kindness or courtesy in him, and who is not too much haunted by the thought of self, may gather pleasant friends around him. The pulse of youth beats through the whole society ; and, although we know that we may have many and serious faults, may we not also hope to find here some virtues which do not equally flourish in the larger world, such as disinterestedness, warm-heartedness, freedom from jealousy and meanness, disregard of mere rank or wealth, a generous admiration of others ?

Once more : there is another blessing or gift which youth enjoys in a far greater degree than later life—the gift of acquiring knowledge. To those who have any taste for it, study is one of the greatest pleasures. They take an interest in their work, and this is also the surest sign of their improvement in it ; they delight to feel not merely that they are adding to their stores, but that new powers of mind are being awakened in them. They love the great and simple ideas of the ancient poets, historians, and philosophers ; to a few, even the study of the ancient languages has an extraordinary charm. When men find study a weariness to the flesh, this seems to arise either from some deficiency in early education, or from the choice of a subject which is ill suited to their natural capacity ; or not unfrequently from over-exertion of the mind. For if the student is to have this freedom and joy of which I am speaking, he must be above his work ; he must keep his head clear and be master of his faculties, not overworking them, but rather setting a limit to his exertions ; for so only will he have the true use of them.

The recollection of the blessings of youth makes some of us wish that we could be young again. I do not say this, for to everything there is a time, as the Preacher also tells us. And long after the days of our youth have passed away we may hope that the spirit of youth may still animate us, and the companionship of youth may renew and refresh us. But

it is a sad thing never to have had a youth or to have made no good use of it. For youth is the foundation of manhood. It will never come back to us, and we can never be in this world what we might have been, if we have lost or wasted it. The happiness, too, of early life depends upon its innocence; we cannot rejoice in idleness, or in self-indulgence, or in sin. The voice of conscience is heard accusing us of things which we would rather not have known or spoken about. And in some cases this shame and sorrow in our lives may be accompanied by doubts about religious truths, which in the present day, owing to the circumstances of our age, often beset susceptible minds (and sometimes the best among us), and we become unhappy and unsettled. Then we hardly know the meaning of the words 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth,' for youth is not a time of joy but of sadness to us. And there may be other causes, partly real, partly imaginary, such as poverty, or family difficulties, or dishonour, or the want of health to accomplish what is expected of us, or even shyness, which unduly depresses a sensitive mind.

These reflections lead me to speak to you of the responsibilities of youth, both lesser and greater; or rather, I should say, of some of them, as they occur to me, in the short time that remains. They are the correlatives of the happiness of youth which I was describing. We could do so much for ourselves, if we only thought about it, and knew the way. For

although there are some things which are beyond us, and which we must leave in the hands of God, yet to most of us, two-thirds, or I may say three-fourths, of life are in our own power, for good or evil, for happiness or the reverse.

Among the responsibilities of youth which I hardly know whether to call greater or lesser, for it is very great if we consider the consequences and the punishment, but not so great if we think only of the moral fault of neglecting it, is the care of health. It is a duty of which we hardly think, and had better not talk: it is one at which we may sometimes be disposed to laugh. For in youth most of us have health enough and to spare, and we cannot look forward thirty or forty years to a time when the remains of it may have to be husbanded. We do not keep before our minds life as a whole, in which there are many things to be done requiring our whole strength, or remember that there is one condition of success in any business or profession, and that is good health. And in almost every case it is in our own power to secure this. I suppose that if by any process of diet or exercise we could double our muscular strength, the imagination of any young man would be fired with a desire to obtain this new development of his powers, that he might excel others in feats of skill and strength. We cannot do this, but we can do the other. We cannot by taking thought add one cubit to our stature; but we can improve the body for the service

of the mind, we can get rid of headaches and nervousness, we can preserve the memory, we can lessen the waste of life by introducing order and regularity into it. Some of us appear to be very ignorant of the first laws of our physical well-being ; we have hardly learned the lesson of self-control in eating and drinking, of which the excess leads to very serious evils, both mental and moral. We do not see that the mind is dependent upon the body, and we sometimes overwork both at once. Does anybody really suppose that the pleasing excitement of late hours makes the mind stronger or better ; or that the tired intellect gains any power from the food which it is unable to digest ? Those who have experience of such maladies know very well that the tendency to overwork is not a sign of energy, or even of industry, but of weakness, and that the temptation is often the strongest at the very time when the faculties are most in need of repose. The mind which is overtaken cannot be cured by exertion, its efforts are only powerless dreams. But though 'heaviness may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning.' The thought that no effort can arrange, the hopeless tangle of words and facts, after a few hours' sleep finds without an effort an order and arrangement of its own. When the ground has been fallow for a time the seed will begin to grow again. The true test of intellectual progress is not acquisition, but the increase of the powers of the mind ; not how much we know, but

how we can think, write, converse, act. These are hints commonplace enough, yet no longer commonplace when we begin to apply them to our lives. For every one must be his own physician, and what is necessary for one may not be equally required by another. Let me sum up all in these words of the Apostle: 'Therefore, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, let us do all for the glory of God.'

And besides mere irregularities, which are chiefly culpable for the consequences which they entail, there are sins, too, of many kinds which greatly impair health. They darken life, they destroy self-respect, they are fatal to strength and manliness of character. In after years the recollection of them casts a dark shadow on the brightness of our youth, which is never, perhaps, entirely effaced. Some of them are known to ourselves and God only—and there I shall leave them; no one has a right to pry into the hearts and consciences of others. But if among those here present there are any who are beset by such temptations, I would ask them to think of themselves sometimes as in the presence of God, with whom there is no darkness or concealment, to remember their homes and their parents, to whom, far away, though they do not speak of these subjects, this is, probably, one of the most real trials of life; to carry their minds forwards a few years, and think of the effect upon their own future happiness; and by every means in

their power, by prayer, by moderation, by manly resolution, to free themselves from the tyranny and misery of sensual passion.

Once more, the life of happiness cannot be a life of idleness. Even young children, when they do nothing but play, grow listless and weary of themselves, though they hardly know the reason. Much more does life in after years become tasteless and insipid, if we have no higher interests, political, social, religious, *nothing* to think or speak about but the gossip of the day, the last new story, the ever recurring tale of sport. It is half a life, or rather, much less than half at best. For the higher converse of men and women with one another implies cultivation of mind; and there can hardly be cultivation of mind without study. When we have grown up without education, either through our own fault or that of others, we find that we are not only ill-formed, but that we are incapable of learning, or can only learn with difficulty, and that from our want of mental training we are unfitted for any intelligent profession. As the Preacher tells us, there is a time for all things, a time to learn, and a time to use our knowledge, and if we have thrown away the years between twenty and twenty-five we can hardly recover them. Besides, what a sham it is to come up here as students, at a great cost to others, and then to make the chief business of our lives not study but amusement, so that at the end of three or four years we go away, not

much better, but rather worse, than we came up. What account can we give of such a waste of time and opportunities, of the best gifts of God, to ourselves and to Him? 'For God requireth that which is past.'

Therefore, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might'; be earnest in study, be earnest also in your amusements, for something of seriousness may without impropriety mingle also with them. Life is short, and each stage of it is apt to come to an end before the work which belongs to it is finished. I will not add the reason which the Preacher gives, 'For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.' But rather, because we believe this life to be the beginning of another, into which we carry with us what we have been and done here; because we are working together with God, and He is upholding us in our work; because, when the hour of death approaches, we should wish to think, like Christ, that we have completed life, that we have finished the work which was given us, that we have not lost one of those who were entrusted to us.

And now, for the words 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth,' I will venture to substitute other words, 'Rejoice, whether young or old, in the service of God'; rejoice in the beauty of this world, in its fair scenes, in its great interests, in the hope and promise of knowledge. Rejoice in the thought of

another life to which as we grow older we are drawing nearer. Rejoice in the companionship and affection of others, in the home to which no place can compare, in the friends whom nothing but death can part. Rejoice in the dead, more happy than the living, not as the Preacher says because they are without sense, but because 'they are in the hands of God, and there shall no evil touch them.' Rejoice in the work which God has given us to do here, knowing that it is His work, and the preparation for a higher, which we shall carry on far beyond what we are capable of thinking or imagining at present. Rejoice that we have got rid of the burden of selfishness, and egotism, and conceit, and those littlenesses and meannesses, which drag us down to earth, that our consciences are as the noonday clear, that we do not willingly allow ourselves in any sin. Rejoice that we are at peace, and can be resigned to the will of God, whatever it may have in store for us. Rejoice that we can live no longer for ourselves, but for God and our fellow-men. Rejoice, too, in the truth, whatever that may be, which is slowly unveiling itself before our eyes, for God is truth, and every addition to truth is an addition to our knowledge of Him. He will purge away the mists that environ us, and give us clearness, and 'the mind through all her powers irradiate.' Rejoice last of all in the love of Christ, who gave Himself for us, and in the love of all other men who, bearing His image,

have sacrificed themselves for the good of others. And, to sum up all, in the language of the Apostle, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.'

This is that other voice which we hear in the Gospel inviting us to love and peace and joy in the presence of God, unlike that barren voice with which we communed for awhile in a passing mood. The ecstasy of the Apostle may seem to us a dream only ; it may seem also to be the truest of all things. But whether we are able altogether to receive the words of the Gospel, or not, we may find something in them applicable to our own lives which may help to raise us out of the world in which we mostly live into that of which Christ speaks to us.

IX

¹ *REJOICE WITH THEM THAT REJOICE, AND WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP. BE OF ONE MIND ONE TOWARDS ANOTHER.*

ROMANS xii. 15, 16.

A DISTINGUISHED philosopher of the last century has endeavoured to show that all our moral ideas are ultimately to be referred to the principle of sympathy. He says that most of our actions, if we analyse them, flow from the desire to please others, or to obtain their approval, or agreement, or assent. The light-hearted word expects to meet with a friendly response; the serious remark to be treated with seriousness; the jest falls flatly unless it creates a laugh. At every turn of life and in mere trifles we need the co-operation and conversation of others. And in our greater sorrows and joys we desire that other men should share our feelings with us, and that we should have the benefit of their sympathy and counsel. And men and women, knowing how dependent they are themselves on the kindness of others, are not unwilling to give what they desire to receive, and sometimes they put themselves in the place of a friend and think: 'That sorrow might have been my sorrow,'

¹ Preached at Balliol, January, 1879.

'that wrong may be some day inflicted on me,' 'that illness may set its mark upon me'; so fear for ourselves, and love for ourselves, and resentment about ourselves, is supposed to raise in our hearts a corresponding feeling about the joys, sorrows, and wrongs of some one else.

But then human nature is so constituted that we feel for ourselves much more than for others; for those who are present more than for those who are absent; for the wrong in suffering which is recent, more than for that which is a tale of the olden time. A toothache, an earache, a fit of the gout, causes much more pain and disquietude to those who are afflicted by them, than the destruction by famine of many millions of men in the remote regions of India or China, and this would be more apparent if grown-up men and women, like children, were in the habit of expressing all they feel about their bodily aches and pains. On the other hand, most considerate persons would confess that we say and think too much of ourselves and far too little of those greater and more general calamities, a famine, or an earthquake, or a mining explosion with which a distant country or locality may be visited. What affects us in our own persons creates a deep and lasting impression on our minds, and what affects our families or beloved friends is still near to us, but what affects India or China is soon forgotten and scarcely ruffles the equable current of our lives. Therefore, says our moralist, we must

lower the pitch of our feelings about ourselves until we bring them down to such a point that active men can feel with us; and we must raise the pitch of our feelings about others until in some degree they keep time and tune with the feelings of the sufferers. This is the law of sympathy, the meeting-point of the love of self and the love of our neighbour, out of which flow all the gentler virtues. And not only the gentler virtues, such as benevolence and compassion, but the sterner, such as justice, are based upon a similar compromise. The resentment which a savage feels at an injury or an insult is out of all proportion to the wrong which he has suffered. But before the savage society can become a civilized one, this wild passion must be reduced within limits by the opinion and reason of other men; and so out of resentment in the bosom of the savage is slowly developed in the civilized world the empire of justice. The merit and demerit of actions again are said to flow from the gratitude or resentment which they arouse in him who is the object of them; and here again the individual sentiment is limited and corrected by that of the world at large. You see, I think, by this time the general character of the system which I am trying to explain. It may be described, like another famous system, as making virtues consist in a mean between excess and defect, the too great regard for self being the excess, the too little regard for our neighbour being the defect. I will not further detain you by attempting to

show how this author supports his account of human action by the doctrine of utility, or how much he is willing to concede to the force of habit and custom.

Such is the famous theory of the moral sentiments first put forward by Dr. Adam Smith, in the year 1759, six years before his greater and better-known work the *Wealth of Nations*. It has a special interest for us here, because the author of these two treatises was an undergraduate of this college, residing here as a Snell Exhibitioner for seven years, between 1740 and 1747. Like similar theories which rest morality on abstract principles such as benevolence, self-love, utility, it draws attention to facts which might otherwise have escaped notice; and it lights up some obscure places in human nature. It is interesting and curious, but it cannot be said to afford an adequate explanation of the moral nature of man. Which of us, if he interrogates his own breast, is conscious, that when he sorrows for another he is fearing or imagining a similar sorrow affecting himself, or fancying, when he rejoices with another, that a like happiness may be one day in store for him? Which of us really sorrows for the misfortunes of another as if they were his own? Such unity of feeling may exist in a very few relations of life, say, for example, in the case of a mother and son, but generally this absolute identity of sorrow or joy is not within the compass of human nature; it may be felt for a few hours or days, but it bears no proportion

to the whole of life. Sympathy, though one of the most universally diffused, is not one of the strongest elements of human nature: ambition in greater minds, jealousy in lesser ones, are often more influential. Like other theories of the eighteenth century, the theory of the moral sentiments errs in attempting to reduce to a simple principle what is essentially multiform and complex. It regards men as individuals, not as the members of a society, and views them in one aspect only. To the author of this theory, as to most of his contemporaries, the influence of language or of literature, the power which the human mind has of forming ideals of truth and life, the very conception of an education of the human race, seem to have been foreign, and never to have come within the range of their philosophy.

Without assuming sympathy to be the basis of morality, we yet may truly allow it to hold a very important place in the economy of human action, and in what remains of this sermon, I propose to consider it not as a principle of philosophy, but as what we all know and feel, the natural power or gift which draws men's hearts to one another, and makes them understand one another, which divides their sorrows and increases their joys. It is liable to abuse also, and even in its best form falls short of that higher sympathy which we look for in the heavens. And first I shall speak to you of its nature and limits; secondly, of the danger which arises from the excess

of too great indulgence of it; and thirdly, of that higher sympathy which the best men and women only are capable of feeling towards one another, such sympathy as saints and apostles felt towards the suffering and ignorant, such as Christ felt towards His disciples, which is to us the earthly image of the love of God towards all mankind.

The most natural idea that we form of sympathy is sympathy with sorrow. In times of affliction, when we see the young and the fair sinking into a premature grave; or when, through some business transaction, persons are suddenly plunged from comfort and affluence into want and hardship, then others do really feel for them; and often a kindness almost unsuspected hitherto is revealed in some reserved and self-contained nature. But then what are we to say to them, and how are we to relieve them? I suppose that every one called to minister to a friend who has lost a wife or child must have felt this difficulty. Our words are so poor and cold compared with the intensity of their sorrow, who seem to have lost their all in this world. The poet warns us against the common-places of consolation—

. . . . 'that "Other friends remain,"
That "Loss is common to the race"—
And common is the commonplace,
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.'

And yet another poet tells us—

'That consolation's sources deeper are
Than sorrow's deepest';

and an old proverb also says that 'Sorrows when past are converted into blessings.' But how are we to escape from the commonplace? First, we can give our friend our sincere feelings; we can make him feel that he is at home with us in his sorrow, that he can talk to us about it; and the mere expression of sorrow is doubtless a relief. The simple affection of the child, grieved at seeing others grieve, is the best and purest image of this as of some other human feelings. But the sufferer seems to require something more than simple affection. He wants to realize what he is himself half inclined to believe, that in all sorrow there is an element of good, and that his loss was intended for his improvement and education, just as all evil seems to be a part of the education of the world; that this sickness was not merely unto death, but for the glory of God, and that in some way or other all things are working together for good to them that love God. He needs to be reminded that this above all others is the way in which the departed spirit would desire that his or her memory should speak to him. He requires to be raised above himself and above the world, but not into a region of hopes and fancies; and at the same time he has to be brought back into actual life.

And equally about calamities of a different kind, such as the loss of fortune, which are in some respects more severe because they cannot be healed by time; the sufferer should be made to feel that even out of this most trying form of sorrow, because affecting

others whom we love as well as ourselves, still some good may be elicited. He must be taught by them to be more dependent on himself and more independent of the opinion of others; that he must deserve help and then he will receive it; above all, that he must be up and doing, and that if he feels his sorrows like a man, he must act like a man. And what is to be said of another kind of sorrow, trouble of mind, perhaps arising from bodily, perhaps from moral causes, which seems of all sorrows the most in need of help and the most incapable of being helped? I will not reply, 'There the patient must minister to himself.' For indeed the counsel of another may do much for him; it may arouse new interests in him; it may enable him to see his rooted sorrow or fixed idea in truer proportions, it may help and deliver him from himself. The kind word of a friend, like a strain of music, may drive away the evil spirit for a time. It is a great thing if in his suffering he can be made to feel that he must keep the mind above the body, and that the melancholy to which he has fallen a prey may be in reality due to some trifling physical cause.

But now to be able to communicate any relief to others we must have that in ourselves which will gain their confidence. Children cling to grown up persons because they are stronger and know more than themselves; and so in later life we look up to and depend upon the stronger natures, the larger heart, the deeper feeling. There are some persons to whom

every sufferer instinctively turns, knowing that they are sure to receive the considerate word, the kind wish, the helpful service from them. There are some persons whose characters seem to acquire a new power and beauty amid scenes of suffering and of death. There are a few who have found a satisfaction, which nothing else on earth could have given them, in alleviating the sufferings of others. But most of us when we seek to console others, find this difficulty; that we really do not feel enough about them, especially when they are out of our sight, to justify us in expressing much sorrow; for we do not like to say what we do not feel. So shallow does human nature sometimes seem when tried by any severer test; so poor do our own characters appear to many of us, when we compare the regard which we have for ourselves with the regard which we extend to others.

Sympathy in suffering and trial is the most obvious example of community of feeling; but there are many other forms, of which I have only time to enumerate one or two. There is the sympathy of a general with his soldiers, though he is placed in a position in which even the ordinary feelings of mankind have to be sternly suppressed. The iron man upon whom the fate of nations depends, under his armour may conceal a heart like that of a child or a woman. He may feel for the hardships and sufferings of his soldiers; he may know and care

for them individually ; he may see that justice is done to them, and that they are not defrauded or cheated by others. And as surely as the word of command passes through the ranks to the extremity of the army, so surely does the suppressed feeling in the breast of their general vibrate through the heart of every man who is under his command : so mighty is the power of kindness in this world even amid scenes of blood and on a field of battle. We have read in history of some for whom men would have been willing to sacrifice their lives ; of commanders like him whose signal, ‘that England expects every man to do his duty,’ gave new force to his soldiers or sailors ; whose loss is personally mourned by them and by a whole nation like the death of a brother or of a friend.

Yet one other form, and it is one of the most useful forms, of sympathy, may be naturally considered by us in this place,—the sympathy of the teacher with the pupil. Some persons may never have understood that teaching has anything to do with sympathy. The gifts which they look for in the teacher, are knowledge of the subject, clearness in the arrangement of materials, power of illustration, accuracy, diligence ; nor can any one be a good teacher in whom these qualities are wanting. And yet much more than this is required. For the young have to be educated through the heart as well as the head ; the subtle influence of the teacher’s character, his love

of truth, his disinterestedness, his zeal for knowledge, should imperceptibly act upon them. Dry light, without any tincture of the affections, may truly under a figure describe science. Of teaching it would be truer to say that it must be clothed in the language of affection and enthusiasm, that it must be warm as well as light. Further, the relation of a teacher is a personal one, and human beings are much more easily led by feeling than by reason. He who is capable of taking an interest in each of his pupils individually; who by a sympathetic power can reach what is working in their hearts or perplexing their understanding; who has such a feeling for them that he has acquired the right to say anything to them, has in him the elements of a great teacher. He will be sanguine about them too, because he feels confident in what he and they by a perfect understanding of one another can jointly accomplish. And in general to think better of mankind than they always deserve is a safe as well as a generous rule in the conduct of life; most men have some virtues which are not recognized at first sight, and a degree of intelligence which requires to be drawn out. And generous feeling in an elder is sure to be met by generous response in a younger person. Let the teacher now in middle and later life remember the trials of his own youth, some real, so many fanciful, and think what he would have given for a healing word of comfort, or of sympathy; what sort of advice

would have done him good by saving his health or his time, by correcting his inaccuracy or want of taste, and let him resolve if possible to impart to others the help of which he has so greatly felt the want himself.

But sympathy is liable to abuse, and it may even degenerate into weakness. There may be too much craving for it; and too much readiness to impart it. Respecting the first let us remember that we have each of us to make our own lives, and that another cannot do for us what we ought to be doing for ourselves. There are some persons who are always wanting to lean upon others, to take them into their confidence, to tell them the secrets of their souls; especially in youth they form friendships with any one in whom they can find a response. A secret charm in another leads them on; there is one person in the world, not probably the worthiest of their acquaintance, very likely one of the weakest and most effusive, who for a time has a greater attraction to them than father, mother, brother, sister, and all their old and tried friends. Whether it is a kind of mesmerism which overpowers them; or whether they fall under the influence of a stronger will than their own, sometimes intensified to the pitch of madness; or whether there is some secret and mysterious communion of feeling which unites them; such friendships are often regarded with regret in after life. It seems a pity to have thrown away the treasures of affection on a person who was unworthy of them or who deserved

them only in part. Sometimes they have violent ends. The friend whom we erected into a pope, whom we converted into a hero, is seen to be a very ordinary person. But it would have been better that we had been disillusioned from the first, and had not thrown away the society of others for his sake. It is not a promising sign of young persons when they hang about others, instead of each one making himself a character and life of his own. There are doubtless noble and generous friendships formed by men and women for their mutual good—especially at the University—which are a blessing to them all their lives long. But we must remember also, as ✓ Bunyan says, that ‘there is a way to hell close to the gates of heaven.’ Men ignorant of the world and of themselves may fall under the influence of women who may poison the cup of existence to them. Women too may easily be betrayed by their gentlest feelings into misery and ruin. The world has been so ordered by God that the best things lie very near the worst, and that the worst are the corruption of them.

Yet there is another danger or temptation connected with sympathy: as there are some persons who crave for it too much, there are some who are too ready to impart it. It has been said that there is something in the misfortunes of our best friends which is not wholly displeasing to us—a cynical word which yet perhaps admits of a more innocent interpretation than the author of it intended. For there

is a pleasure, not in the misfortune of our friends, but in being able to feel with them and to console them. And hence persons will often seek to make occasions for sympathy ; the excitement of it is agreeable to them. There are a few who at the first sight of others are naturally drawn to them and conceive an affection for them almost as if they were relations : this sort of friendship is not destined to last, and is generally doomed to disappointment. Such peculiar natures, when they mingle much with the world, commonly have a double fame. They are greatly praised and greatly blamed. To one part of mankind they appear to be the most delightful of mortals ; by severer and more critical judgments they are branded as hypocrites, and their weaknesses are often exaggerated, and the good qualities which they really possess are denied. The danger of this over-sympathetic temperament is that it impairs the love of truth, and gives birth to many kinds of illusions in the minds of those who are endowed with it, as well as those who are susceptible to its influence. To do and say anything just to please others weakens our own character and destroys the confidence which we should desire our friends to repose in us. The language of compliments and flattery is not that which a man of sense will employ (except perhaps occasionally and in jest), because it is unworthy of himself and is an insult to the understandings of those to whom it is addressed.

But enough of these weaknesses by which sympathy, like other human qualities, is apt to be deformed and corrupted. Let us rather think of it such as it might be, free from every taint of sensuality or insincerity, or false sentiment, such as 'celestial spirits may feel' in this world, such as we hope may be realized by some communion of saints in another. Of this higher sympathy there could never be too much; it would be nothing short of the love of God and man taking possession of the human soul. And respecting human feelings generally, I think that we may lay down this law, that in proportion as they are exerted on higher objects they may safely be allowed to grow more and more intense; there can be no danger in our loving God too much, if only we understand His true nature, nor any possibility of abuse in devoting our lives for the good of man, if only we know the means by which that good is to be attained. The earthly flames which light up the human soul for a brief hour have their accompaniment of smoke and ashes, but there may be also a divine affection which is pure and imperishable.

A good and wise man¹ is said by his biographer to have died meditating on the number and order of the blessed angels, without which peace could not be in heaven, 'and, oh that it might be so on earth!' We do not know how this good man filled

¹ Richard Hooker, as described in Izaak Walton's biography.

up the vacant outline of his vision. But without attempting to pierce into the unseen world, may we not find nearer home, quite at our doors, living images far more peaceful and touching of the kingdom of heaven? There is the sympathy of two poor and aged persons, who have nothing else to live for but one another, who in their misery and lowliness have yet retained the thought of the goodness of God, and seem to be raised above the accidents of life by their mutual affection. There is the sympathy of two friends engaged in some common work for the good of mankind: they care nothing about the opinion of the world or of what is called society, but they find great help and comfort in one another. There may be such a sympathy in marriage if, besides the ties of natural affection, there is also a communion in all higher things, in the love of truth, in the desire to do good, in purity and disinterestedness and unworldliness. Such a sympathy there might be in a university or in a religious order, if the minds of its members were fixed on the pursuit of truth, free from every alloy of jealousy and vanity; and if to the desire of truth they added the love of God and of one another. This is the kingdom of heaven upon earth, not as represented to us in pictures, but as seen here and there by the eye of God Himself. And if a man would have this idea of divine or Christian sympathy concentrated in one living image, let him turn to the Epistle of St. Paul,

from which the text is taken, or to his other great Epistle to the Corinthians, then he will find the highest example and expression of it. 'Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep'; 'We therefore that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves.' 'For even Christ pleased not Himself.' 'Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?' 'In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.' In these and similar words we have the image of one who felt for others as keenly as for himself, who suffered in their sufferings and rejoiced in their joys, who lived in his converts a second life, even as his own life seemed to be derived from Christ and God. Such sympathy is wonderful, almost incomprehensible to us; yet we may learn something from it which may be applicable to our own lives.

And I must speak lastly of Him who carried our sins and bore our infirmities in a more special sense than any other among the sons of men; who looked upon men and loved them, who was touched by their misery and ignorance, and sought to bring them back to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God; who wept over the ill-fated city which had not known the things belonging to her peace; whose affections were not limited by

religion or race, who had other sheep to bring into the fold, for whom also He cared; who by intense sympathy with human nature knew what was in men, and did not need to be informed of their intentions or characters; who thought of all men as the children of God who by some accident were estranged from Him; of whom also it is said that among many disciples there was one who was His beloved disciple—who first taught men to love their enemies, and in His last hour prayed not only for the ignorant soldier, but for the Pharisees and Sadducees sunk in the deeper ignorance of prejudice and bigotry, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’

This is the sympathy of Christ with all mankind which we feebly realize and at a distance seek to imitate, yet the image of that love as looking down upon us from the cross still elevates and attracts us. And, although we are weighed down by custom and the burden of self (which we would fain lay aside if we could), we will not cease to carry in our minds that image and to strive in the only way which is possible through the love of man to attain the love of God.

¹ It is with great sorrow I have to mention to you the death of one of the most distinguished members of this College, Mr. John Addington Symonds, which took place after a very brief illness at Rome, last Wednesday morning. He was a man of genius and also of very unusual learning. During the last ten years he has resided at Davos in Switzerland for the benefit of his health. In spite of illness he was always writing and thinking. At the time of his death he had done more, perhaps, already than any of his contemporaries; yet much more might fairly have been expected of him. His studies in Greek poetry, his history of the Renaissance, and his recently published life of Michael Angelo are works of great merit and interest.

Yet there is another trait in his character which I would rather bring before you than his rare intellectual gifts; he was one of the kindest men whom I have ever known. Like his father, 'the beloved physician,' as I may truly call him, who was so distinguished in the West of England, whose name it is, to me, a pleasure to connect with that of his son, he was gifted with a rare power of attracting others and of sympathizing with their wants and

¹ The following words were added when the Sermon was last preached in the College Chapel in April, 1893. They are given as a specimen of the manner in which the preacher was apt to introduce notices of members of the College who had died.

feelings. No one gave more active or liberal help to those who needed it; the inhabitants of Davos, in particular, regarded him as a friend who had done kindness to many of them, and whom they claimed as their own. It is sad to have lost so many distinguished persons as have been taken from us in this College during the last ten years, yet it is also a blessing to have known them.

X

¹ OWE NO MAN ANY THING, BUT TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER : FOR HE THAT LOVETH ANOTHER HATH FULFILLED THE LAW.

ROMANS xiii. 8.

THERE are several things in this verse which are very characteristic of St. Paul. First, there is the tendency to go off upon a word; the mention of the word 'love' seems to suggest to the Apostle's mind his favourite thesis, 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' This he pursues through several verses. Again, he uses the word 'owe' in two different ways; in the familiar signification of 'owing a debt,' owing money, and also in the sense of duty or obligation. As if he said 'Owe no man any thing but that debt which you must always owe and ought to be always paying, the endless debt of love.' Thirdly, there is the tendency which we often observe in the writings of St. Paul to merge the particular in the general, the moral in the spiritual. He is constantly going back to the first principles of the love of God and of man. He is full of them, and therefore he does not require to point out any precise relation in which they stand to

¹ Preached at Balliol, October 14, 1877.

minor or more common duties. Thus in speaking of common honesty which, like other ordinary duties—industry, the duty of hospitality and the like—he does not disdain to urge upon his unseen friends at Rome, he quite naturally to himself by a thread of association which is latent in his own mind, passes on to that love which is the fulfilment of the law.

Leaving the original meaning of the words, which is plain enough when we have remarked the little verbal artifice employed by the Apostle, I purpose to consider the general subject. What are our duties in the matter of money?

(1) What care we should take of it ;

(2) What use we should make of it ;

and then

(3) I shall speak of that higher obligation which the Apostle by a turn of words connects with this humbler duty. The two together comprehend nearly the whole of our social life in this place.

(1) And first of the care of money. That may seem to be a sordid thing, having nothing ideal or spiritual about it ; a thing to be learned in places of business and not to be introduced in a sermon. But, if we reflect, it seems to underlie a great part of the happiness of mankind. There is nothing which weighs more heavily on the spirits than pecuniary anxiety ; there is nothing more delightful than to know that we have enough and to spare for all rational and noble uses. And though the Scripture tells us ‘ to

take no thought for the morrow' (that is the ideal side of the Gospel), it also tells us 'to make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness'; and 'if we are unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon who will commit to our trust the true riches?' (that is the prudential side). We must add to our faith prudence, or we shall be tempting God and risking our own usefulness and happiness. We are not leading the lives of saints and angels, and we must not sink into negligence about the common duties of life under the pretence that we are. It is not in extraordinary ways, but by the due regulation of our ordinary actions, that we hope, if I may use such an expression, to attain to 'the kingdom of God'; and therefore there is no duty so humble or prosaic which may not properly find a place in Christian teaching.

'Owe no man any thing.' This is a homely and excellent rule which carries us a long way in daily life. It is a great comfort to know that we are out of debt, as free from pecuniary troubles in the last term of our Oxford career as in the first. It is a great economy too, for in some form or other we are always paying interest, ten, twenty, thirty per cent. on the debts which we contract. It saves us also from mortifications and concealments; from giving pain to ourselves and giving pain to others, which often strikes very deep indeed. Over the miseries of debt there have been hearts broken—of parents suddenly awakened out of the fool's paradise in which

they have been living; of children saddened by the thought of the sorrow to others which their improvidence has caused. To older persons it is very sad to see, as you occasionally may, in this place a young man who has been, perhaps, with difficulty sent to the University, spending more than he ought, so that the rest of the family have in a measure to deny themselves in consequence of his extravagance. And yet probably they would be the first to make excuses for him. 'He was inexperienced, he was tempted by others, the facility of obtaining credit was so great.' The truth is that we all of us too easily slide into a carelessness about money matters. The enjoyment is present, the hour of reckoning is comparatively distant; almost unconsciously to ourselves a certain amount of debt accumulates. And of course everywhere the seller has the opposite interest to the buyer; he praises his own goods, he keeps out of sight the necessity of payment; he has such a love for us that he is almost ready to give them to us. He discerns which way our inclinations tend and cleverly seconds them; in short, he is acquainted with all the arts by which a weak man can be approached. While we are young we are especially open to influence of this kind. And therefore I say that early in life we should acquire the habit of 'owing no man any thing,' and should deal only with those who are willing that we should 'owe them nothing.' It is good to feel somewhat uneasy while

a bill remains unpaid. I would not require every one to keep minute accounts of his private expenditure, for that might become a needless burden. But every one can with a little trouble to himself see how he stands at the end of each month or of each term. He has only to cast up a few figures; to compare what he has received and what he has paid, and to satisfy himself that nothing has been omitted. Unless he wishes to be deceived, as is the case with some persons who refuse to look into their accounts, he can easily know the truth. And he is inexcusable who is careless in a matter of such importance.

The management of our own concerns is a great part of the silent conduct of life, and it is a good test of whether we can be entrusted with the concerns of others. There is a power which may be easily acquired, but which some never acquire, and others only by dear experience—the power of understanding and doing business. It is hardly thought of by young men in comparison with intellectual gifts, and yet there is no power which conduces more to happiness and success in life. It is like a steward which keeps the house in order. It is the power of managing and administering (*οἰκονομία*), whether in public or in private life. To be a thorough man of business is really a very high praise. It implies a clear head and mastery of details; it requires accuracy and constant attention and sound judgment. Though it begins with figures of arithmetic, it ends with

a knowledge of the characters of men. It is that uncommon quality 'common sense' applied to daily life. It is not contained within the pages of a ledger, but consists rather in the habit of dealing with affairs of which the sums in a book are only the record or symbol. The man of business is in his own sphere a man of the world also. He is not easily imposed upon, because he will never have anything to do with matters which he does not understand. He takes nothing for granted which does not come within the range of his own experience. He is not so foolish as to believe in great promises of future gain merely because he sees them in print. He has a cool head and is not misled by the enthusiasm of others, who having been duped themselves often without dishonesty are the makers of dupes. He knows instinctively the familiar truth that 'high interest is another name for bad security.' If he has to invest property he will act not upon fancies of his own, but upon the best advice and information which he can obtain. He will attend to his concerns and will retain the threads of them in his own hands. Here is a side of life every one should in some degree copy and make his own. There is nothing in it which appeals to the imagination, there is nothing grand in it, but it is useful. And it runs up into higher qualities, uprightness, self-denial, self-control; the honourable man of business is one of the noblest forms of English character.

(2) Enough of the care of money ; let us now proceed to consider the true use of it. Not only are many enjoyments and comforts dependent on the possession of some amount of wealth, but also many of the higher goods of life. Often through extravagance in youth a man may be bound to some inferior or mechanical occupation ; he may be deprived of the means of study or education ; he may lose the best of all God's gifts—independence. Again, he who has nothing can give nothing : economy is the necessary condition of liberality. Every one should try and have a little surplus which he can freely apply to some higher purpose, to the cultivation of his own mind, to the relief of the suffering, to some permanent work of charity or public good. He should save money, not in the spirit of the miser, but because he sees so many ways in which it can be put out at interest for the good of others, yielding sometimes twenty, sometimes thirty, sometimes a hundredfold in return. And though I have been saying that a man should be careful of money, yet there is also a sense in which he should be careless of it, never allowing himself to regard it as an end but only as a means to something better. The time will come when he must part with it ; he cannot take it with him into another world, and the art is how to convert the unrighteous mammon into the true riches.

Many would tell us that the less we give away in charity the better, and such a maxim naturally falls

in with the indolence or selfishness of mankind. The reason is supposed to be that charity tends to destroy independence: men will not do for themselves what others are willing to do for them. If aged persons are supported by the parish they will often be neglected by their children; if education is free, if relief in sickness is given, there will be some corresponding relaxation of duty; the family tie will be weakened and the social state of a country will decline. Such is the argument, in which there is a great deal of truth; and in works of charity I think we might fairly be required to start with some such principle as this, 'that we should never relieve physical suffering at the cost of moral degradation.' But may there not be modes of charity which increase instead of diminishing the spirit of independence? A small loan of money given to a person who is engaged in a hard struggle to keep himself or his children out of the workhouse, for a purpose such as education, which is least liable to abuse, can scarcely be imagined to do much harm. It would be more satisfactory if the poor were able to manage for themselves, and perhaps, when they have been educated for a generation or two, they may be in a different position, and may no longer require the assistance of others. But at present, and in this country, they must have some help from the classes above them; they have no adequate sense of their own higher wants, of education, of sanitary improvement, of the ordering of

family life and the like. We all know the difference between the lot of a parish in our rural districts, which has been cared for by the landlord and looked after by the ministers of religion, and one which has not. And therefore I say that great responsibilities fall upon us who have money or who have education, nothing short of the care of those who in the social scale are below us. Property has its duties as well as its rights, but the sense of right is apt to be stronger in most of us than the sense of duty. Instead of habitually feeling that the poor are our equals in the sight of God, 'that there is nothing which we have not received,' that our advantages, whatever they may be—money, talent, social position—are a trust only—instead of rendering to God the things which He has given—we claim and assert them for ourselves.

Whether gifts of charity are a good or an evil depends upon the manner of giving them. I am quite willing to admit that they may be the greatest evil; nay, that whole nations and classes of society may be demoralized by them. But the inference seems to be not that we ought to get rid of charity, but that much greater pains and care should be taken in the administration of it. The dispensing of charity requires a kind heart, but it also requires the admixture of some sterner stuff in the human bosom. Often the refusal of charity may be a greater kindness than the giving of it. In this matter right and wrong seem to be absolutely determined by the consequences of

our action. We ought not to relieve our feelings or save ourselves from importunity at the cost of encouraging mendicancy. Whatever we do for others should be of such a nature as will tend to elevate them, as will encourage and stimulate not the lower but the higher principle in them. For our own sakes as well as theirs there should be no display; 'let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth.' Charity should, if possible, not be seen to be charity; it should be just a part of our ordinary business, never spoken of except as such; and thus the greater part of its danger, both to ourselves and others, will be avoided.

To charity is nearly allied the virtue of liberality, which is reckoned in most ancient lists of the virtues, but in modern times seems rather to have lost its dignity and place. 'The liberal man deviseth liberal things and by liberal things he shall stand.' I suppose that there are few of us who would like to be thought mean in the conventional payments of life, we should rather desire to err on the side of liberality. To be involved in small disputes about money is a reflection on a man's temper or on his good sense. There is one principle, however, which may be rightly urged upon him in small matters as in great, that he should act precisely in the same manner whether he is under the control of public opinion or whether he is not. A very few, perhaps, who are in their hearts liberal, may from the 'early chill of poverty,

which is not easily got out of the bones,' or from some other cause, find a temptation in themselves to narrow ways: they should conceal them and get rid of them.

There are many noble ways in which wealth may be employed, but a man must select them for himself; they must accord with his tastes and circumstances. One way which the Apostle commends is hospitality; the bringing together our friends to eat and drink and converse, and not only those who are of equal or higher rank than ourselves and can ask us again, but those who are a little depressed in life, and who may be said in a figure to correspond to the halt and maimed in the parable of the Marriage Supper. Hospitality may do a great deal of good in the world. It binds men together in ties of friendship and kindness; it draws them out of their isolation; it moulds and softens their characters. The pulse seems to beat quicker and our spirits flow more freely when we are received with a hearty welcome; when the entertainer is obviously not thinking of himself but of his guests, when the conversation has health and life in it and seems to refresh us after toil and work.

Another mode of liberality is the free use of money for any great object. There are so many things which can be accomplished in the world, if persons are indifferent or comparatively so to the value of money, which cannot be accomplished if they are

niggardly or exacting. Liberality makes others liberal; it smooths the path in any great enterprise; it infuses a spirit into society. In corporate bodies especially, whose property is a trust in the more established sense of the word, public interests should always be preferred to private.

In the best time of the ancient world the munificence of private citizens undertook many public services—the remains of their works may still be found surviving at the present day. A similar spirit in the Middle Ages covered England with monasteries and churches. Has it altogether departed among ourselves? Not quite; we may trace some reflection of it in the church restoration which has gone on in the last thirty years, and seems to leave little for the next generation to complete. There remains another work more sacred and more important still, which must greatly affect the welfare of this country in coming ages (would that it were possible for us to see it accomplished in our own life-time!), the restoration and improvement of the dwellings of the poor.

I have indicated a few ways in which wealth may be nobly spent; let me return to speak of the principle from which, according to the Apostle, these and the like actions should flow—the love of one another. Like some other words of Scripture the expression may seem a little too strong to denote the relation which exists generally in any society even of

Christians except towards a very few, and may need translation into some other form of words. I should not like to say that a society is dependent on the love of its members for one another, but rather on their common feeling, on their kindness and friendship to one another, or, to use another expression of the Apostle, on their being of one mind one towards another. The persons who are brought together here from various parts of the world and from different classes of society, over and above their common duty to the rest of mankind, have special duties to one another. They are bound by a nearer tie than men in general; they ought to help one another; they have common interests; they ought not to be indifferent to anything which affects the good or credit of the society. There are different characters among them who make up what is wanting in each other. As the Apostle says of the Church of Christ 'we have many members in one body and all members have not the same office,' so in any school or college there is a variety and at the same time interdependence of the elements which compose them. One of the first of duties in this place is to raise and improve social life, to bring men together and make them friends, to get rid of sets and animosities, to maintain and elevate the tone of daily conversation. Even a single person who has strong affection and principle, and a natural gaiety of soul, may have a great influence for good: without pre-

tending to be wiser or better than others, he may have a form of character which controls them. People hardly consider how much good a little kindness may do in this sometimes troubled world. When a man is a stranger in a strange place, a sympathetic word, a silent act of courtesy, makes a wonderful impression. The plant that was shrinking into itself under these genial influences brings forth leaves and flowers and fruit. There is probably no one, who, if he thought about it, would not contribute much more than he does to the happiness of others. There are relations again towards servants which might often be better than they are. Many a one has found among them the best and faithfullest of friends. Let us show a little consideration of them in their daily toil, taking care of them, as they take care of us, and helping them in such ways as we can, and acknowledging that we have a common interest with them. The eye of the friend finds out the mental as well as the bodily wants of others, and tries to minister to them.

These seem to be some of the practical modes in which, living in this place, we may carry out the Apostle's injunction that we should love one another: and would that the love of one another might spring from the love of God! For then it would be equable and enduring: like His love to us, it would have no distinctions of sect or country or caste; it would not be the light result of a capricious fancy. The deeper

feelings of human nature all take their origin from Him and find in Him a resting place. Where His peace is, there is the true peace; where 'His love is shed abroad in men's hearts,' there men are of one mind in a college and in a family; where His truth is, there are no more verbal disputes or theological controversies. In this higher peace and love and truth we would fain live, although we know that any reflection of them to which we can attain in this world is necessarily partial and imperfect.

XI

¹ OF MAKING MANY BOOKS THERE IS NO END, AND MUCH STUDY IS A WEARINESS OF THE FLESH. LET US HEAR THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER: FEAR GOD AND KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS; FOR THIS IS THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

ECCLES. xii. 12, 13.

THESE two verses breathe the double spirit of that strange book in which we are taught that 'all is vanity,' and yet that 'God will bring every word and thought into judgment.' The writer is weary of himself and of all human things: he is seeking for a truth beyond these, which he can hardly, if at all, see. The first of these two spirits is what in our own days has been called 'Pessimism.' But this view of the preacher reaches further and is more searching than that of any modern writer on the same subject. Man has nothing; knows nothing; is nothing. Yet from this negation of hope and good, in which all the idols of this world are laid low, there springs up at last the conviction that to do rightly is the final end of life, and that, though all things in heaven and earth should disappear, the true rock remains, not so much as a belief, but as a necessity of human nature.

¹ Preached at Balliol, January, 1885.

I do not propose to consider how much of this high argument is applicable to our own day. No doubt there are persons among ourselves who are anxious to do rightly and keep the commandments of God, who yet feel themselves to be standing on a very narrow ledge of religious belief or knowledge. Into that application of the argument I am not going to enter, but only to draw your attention to the first verse of the text: 'Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness to the flesh.' Does not the note which they utter at times find an echo in our inmost hearts? We fancy that they are more applicable to our own age than to any which has preceded. There is so much excitement in the world; such a Babel of voices; so many winds blowing from all quarters of the heavens, that we can hardly be ourselves, or possess our souls in patience. And sometimes we are disposed to ask whether our forefathers were not happier than we are in their comparative fixity of opinions, in their narrowness and simplicity, living in the country or in small towns, with few books and an occasional review or newspaper: whether what we have gained in knowledge we may not have lost in force of character? And the writers of books cannot avoid making a similar reflection. To what end has been all this strain and effort of mind? For a long work involves a great deal of anxiety, far greater than the author of the work ever dreamed of when

he first conceived the idea of it. How shall he express himself so that he may be understood? How will his work be received by the public? How long will his labours live? Will he ever be freed from the chain which drags upon him? Such are the thoughts which are often recurring to his mind. More than thirty years ago I remember meeting on the Surrey downs a remarkable looking man: one who has been thought to be, as perhaps he was, a great teacher of this and a former generation. Shall I tell you his name? It was Thomas Carlyle. He said to me, 'I am wearied out with the burden of writing, and I am just come to spend a day or two walking about among the hills.' And to another person he said, 'I only want to lay my head on the pillow and be at rest.' And I have no doubt that he, if any one, would have found in the words of the text the expression of one of his own strongest convictions, 'of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh'; and I believe that he would have added, 'Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.'

But every student, and not the writer of books only, has trials and difficulties of his own. The weariness of knowledge comes upon him, and he too would like to be in the fields enjoying the fresh air or the bright sun, listening to the murmuring

stream, or to the voices of innumerable birds, tossing in the hayfield instead of poring over books. 'What can be more delightful,' said some one to a great statesman (Charles Fox), 'than on a hot summer's day to lie in the long grass with a book in one's hand?' But 'Why with a book?' is the well-known reply; and I do not doubt that there are persons here present who have experienced a similar feeling. For the minds of most of us do not seem capable of bearing any very long or continuous strain; they lose their tone, and may become seriously injured if we attempt to resist this natural desire for rest. It is important to do whatever we have to do with all our might; it is also important to know when to leave off. Study is not the whole business of life; he can never be a great scholar who is a mere scholar; there should be some proportion between the powers of memory and acquisition, and the power of thought or creation. If we neglect these simple principles we shall be dwarfed and stunted; we shall never attain any perfect growth of mind or character. This is the application which I make of the Preacher's words, not his own, but one which may be fairly made of them, in the few remarks which I have to offer on the 'Method of Study.' We are all of us 'students' in some degree and in different ways; we all of us read and write according to our abilities. Is it too much to suppose that there may be a theory as well as a practice of study; and that if we would attend

to the true method of reading and thinking, many things might be made easier and more interesting, much time might be saved, perhaps health preserved, and far greater progress made than hitherto? There is a common proverb that every man is either a fool or a physician at forty; and the student in like manner before he is twenty should be able to 'minister to himself'; he should understand his own character; he should realize his own defects and advantages, and the '*défauts de ses qualités*': and he may sometimes be profited by the experience of another and not be unwilling to catch up what men say of him behind his back; to see himself as others see him; and to take the hint which a friend in season offers him.

There are some questions which, though simple, may serve to stimulate our interest in the inquiry: Why do some men make such rapid progress while others are always lagging behind, not in proportion either to their ability or industry? Why do some men only succeed at the University and not in after-life? What are the qualities which enable a candidate to do well, as the phrase runs, in an examination? And how may an able man make the most of his abilities? How may an ordinary man become a useful member of society? What is the relation between talent and industry? Or rather, is not talent, and even genius, the power of taking pains? We know that nothing considerable was ever accomplished without concentration;

but it does not therefore follow that we should be always concentrating ourselves. There is a time for effort and a time for relaxing effort; there are many things that we should leave to habit and instinct, and allow ourselves to grow like the flowers of the field, like trees by the river-side.

A picture of the successful student and of the unsuccessful may throw more light upon the subject which we are considering than any methodical treatment of it. There are some persons to whom every sort of knowledge has an interest, and there is no greater proof of capacity than this. They seem to learn almost faster than they can be taught; they improve upon what they are taught; they light up with their own intelligence the page of the book which they are reading, the experiment which they are observing. Yet they are equally remarkable for their teachableness; the least hint of the truth which is thrown out to them by an older person is eagerly caught up and welcomed by them. They instinctively perceive what is important and what is unimportant, and as no man can remember all things, they keep the two in their proper places. They have the sense of proportion which the Greeks called by an expressive term 'the art of measuring,' and which we commonly term 'judgment.' They do not waste memory, that 'gift of God,' on trivial and foolish reading which is hurtful to the mind; nor do they complain of it as insufficient for the acquirement

of knowledge. They not only read but think ; new analogies or points of view are constantly occurring to them ; and every part of their studies is brought to bear upon every action of their lives. And they not only think but speak and write with clearness and simplicity, not allowing the matter to be overlaid with words, not using figures of speech and rhetorical arts, but letting their ideas express themselves as if by accident in their most natural form. Such students, on entering on the study of history or physiology or of moral or metaphysical philosophy, feel that they are acquiring a new faculty and have a new world opening upon them. They learn things in their natural order, and at the right time ; they do not put them off, or try to recover them when too late. If they have good health, and do not allow the mind to overstrain the body, they are among the happiest of men. Such students are the wings of their teacher ; they seem to know more than they ever learn ; they clothe the bare and fragmentary thought in the brightness of their own minds. Their questions suggest new thoughts to him, and he appears to derive from them as much or more than he imparts to them. A few such persons there have been at this College, perhaps two or three at any one time, who by their character and abilities have been conspicuous above their fellows.

May we venture to think of a student cast in a mould higher still, who from early youth to old

age has cultivated his faculties and used them only for the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men, whom no earthly prize, no hope of reaching some ambitious summit in a great profession or in the political arena, has drawn away from the love of the truth, or from perfect sincerity, or from the desire to imitate Christ and to be His follower. What a life might not this be? And why should it be regarded as unattainable in our own age and country? Men have ere now presented themselves 'a living sacrifice' to the service of God; they have given up this world for another; they have counted themselves as nothing that they might win Christ and the truth. Is it a thing romantic and absurd that the idea of consecrating study to the attainment of a higher knowledge of God or to the relief of human suffering should steal over the mind of some men here present?

Yet, perhaps, it may be deemed that this is an ideal only, and that most persons will hardly understand what is here meant. It may be so; and still in lower degrees such ideals may be realized in many of us. May we not begin to love knowledge for its own sake, not for any earthly interest, but from the simple desire to know; not as time-servers or men-pleasers, with the view of obtaining honours in an examination, or of succeeding in a profession, but because it is our duty to make the most of our lives and cultivate the talents which God has given us?

The honest desire to get at the truth about something is really a kind of ability or originality. He whose thoughts are his own and nobody's else, who as a writer or in a narrower sphere has made up his mind on grounds of fact, is different in kind from the imitator or reproducer of the ideas of others. And this is a sort of originality which we are all, perhaps, capable of attaining. We are amazed at men whose capacities far transcend our own; who have inexhaustible stores of knowledge, and who observe and remember apparently without any effort or exertion of mind. But we are hardly less struck by the good sense of others, who have but slender abilities, yet never seem to go wrong or to get out of their depth. In matters of duty they are especially clear, and they do not allow themselves to be disturbed by controverted points of theology. The greater intelligences of the world are often led astray by love of popularity, by sensitiveness, by vanity. But there is also a path of knowledge in which the less gifted among men may safely walk—'the wayfaring man shall not err therein': it shall be called the path of simplicity and good sense, the path of him who receives the kingdom of God as a little child.

It will be instructive to consider why men of great ability so often fail to make any use of the gifts which have been entrusted to them. From indolence, is the first answer; and it is certainly true that great energy is a surer sign of future eminence in life than

any youthful cleverness or literary power. But there are many who are both able and industrious, and yet seem to make nothing of their own lives; there is another reason—intellectual pride—the spirit, which in youth rebels against being taught, and in mature life derives nothing from the teaching of the world. The really able man is not he who learns everything for himself, but he who learns most from the wisdom of other men. And yet there may be a third reason why many men fail in a profession, or in the business of life: because they have no knowledge of human nature; they do not understand either themselves or others; they are incapable of influencing or of being influenced: they are not men of the world, and do not know how to approach their fellow-creatures. And there may still be other reasons: they are eccentric or pedantic; they have never weeded out their own faults; they are overgrown with egotism stimulated by disappointment: they are not men of business—a kind of ignorance which often ends in dishonesty. They fall into debt and into other forms of vice; and many other pictures might be drawn of young men gifted by nature who have belied the promise of their youth, who have begun among the first and ended among the last.

And now leaving these life failures, as I may call them, I will ask why there are so many failures at the University (it is the privilege of the preacher to wander from one topic to another, in the hope that

he may say something which comes home to the minds of his hearers 'be it ever so homely'). First, among the causes of failure at the University, I should be inclined to place 'neglect of health.' Young men are seldom aware how easily the brain may be over-tasked; how delicate and sensitive this organ is in many individuals; they are apt to think they can do what others do; they work the mind and the body at the same time—when they begin to fail they only increase the effort, and nothing can be more foolish than this. They do not understand how to manage themselves, as the phrase is; the common rules of diet and exercise are hardly thought of by them: 'I can work so much better at night' is the constant reply to the physician or elder friend who remonstrates; and they are apt to be assured that no practice which is pleasant to them can ever be injurious to health. They find the memory fail, the head no longer clear; the interest in study flags; and they attribute these symptoms to some mysterious cause with which they have nothing to do. Will they hear the words of the Apostle? 'He that striveth for masteries is temperate in all things': yet it is a more subtle kind of training than that of the athlete, in which they must exercise themselves, a training which regulates and strengthens body and mind at once. Again let them listen to the words of St. Paul, 'Wherefore whether we eat or drink, let us do all to the glory of God.' The care of his

own health and morals is the greatest trust which is committed to a young man; and often and often the loss of ability, the degeneracy of character, the want of self-control is due to his neglect of them.

There are other ways in which this want of self-knowledge shows itself. Many men have serious intellectual defects which they never attempt to cure, and therefore carry them into life instead of leaving them behind at school or college. Let me take for example one such defect—inaccuracy. A student cannot write a few sentences of Latin or Greek, he cannot get through a simple sum of arithmetic, without making a slip at some stage of the process, because he loses his attention. Year after year he goes on indulging this slovenly habit of mind; the remonstrances of teachers are of no avail; he will not take the pains to be cured; the inaccurate desultory knowledge of many things is more acceptable to his mind than the accurate knowledge of a few, and so he grows up and goes into life unfit for any intellectual calling, unfit for any business or profession. Then again there is another kind of inaccuracy which consists in ignorance of the first principles or beginnings of things; when the student has to go back not without difficulty, for there is always a painfulness and awkwardness in learning last what ought to have been learned first. We all know what is meant by a man being ‘a bad scholar,’ which to one who has studied Latin and Greek for ten or more years of

his life is justly held to be a reproach. And there are bad scholars, not only among students of Latin and Greek, but in every department of knowledge, in Mathematics as well as in Classics, in Natural Science as well as in Literature, in Law as well as in History; there are students who have no power of thinking, no clear recollection of what they have read, no exact perception of the meaning of words.

There is another intellectual defect very common in youth, yet also curable, if not always by ourselves, at any rate by the help of others—‘bad taste’—which takes many forms both in speaking and writing: when a person talks about himself, when he affects a style of language unsuited to him, or to his age and position, when he discourses authoritatively to his elders, when he is always asking questions, when his words grate upon the feelings of well-bred and sensible men and women, then he is guilty of bad taste. Egotism or conceit is often the source of this bad taste in conversation; it may sometimes arise only from simplicity and ignorance of the world. There are natures who are always dreaming of full theatres, of audiences hanging on their lips, who would like to receive for all their actions the accompanying meed of approbation. A young person is about to make a speech—it is one of the most important things that he can do in life (and one of the most trying)—when many persons are listening to his words and he a weak swimmer far out to sea; he has prepared

what he is going to say, tricked out his oration with metaphors and figures of speech; he has seen himself speaking, not exactly in the looking-glass, but in the glass of his own mind; and lo! the result is a miserable failure. He has mistaken his own powers, he has struck a wrong note, pitched his speech in a false key. What can be more humiliating? Yet, perhaps, it is also the very best lesson which he has ever had in life. Let him try again—(there was one who said that he had tried at many things and had always succeeded at last). Let him try again, and not allow himself by a little innocent merriment to be deprived of one of the greatest and most useful accomplishments which any man can possess; the power of addressing an audience.

There is another kind of bad taste which is displayed, not in manners nor in speech, but in writing. As persons have a difficulty in knowing their own characters, so has a writer in judging of his own compositions. Writings are like children, whom a parent can never regard in the same impartial manner in which they are viewed by strangers. We too easily grow fond of them. There are many faults which are apt to beset men when they take a pen in their hands. They attempt fine writing, which of all kinds of writing is the worst; they lose the sense of proportion; they deem anything which they happen to know relevant to the subject in hand. They pay little or no attention to the most important

of all principles of composition—‘logical connexion.’ They sometimes imitate the language of famous writers, such as Lord Macaulay or Carlyle, and with a ludicrous result, because they cease to be themselves, and the attempt even if it were worth making cannot be sustained. It was excellent advice that was once given to a young writer, ‘Always to blot the finest passages of his own writings’; and any one of us will do well to regard with suspicion any simile or brilliant figure of speech, which impairs the connexion or disturbs the proportion of the whole. For in the whole is contained the real excellence of a writing, in the paragraph, not in the sentence; in the chapter, not in the paragraph; in the book, rather than in the chapter. And the character of the writer dimly seen may be often greater than the book which he has written.

Yet one more cause of failure in our lives here may be briefly spoken of—the want of method or order. Men do not consider sufficiently, not merely what is suited to the generality, but what is suited to themselves individually. They have different gifts and therefore their studies should take a different course. One man is capable of continuous thought and reading, while another has not the full use of his faculties for more than an hour or two at a time. It is clear that persons so differently constituted should proceed on a different plan. Again, one man is gifted with powers of memory and acquisition,

another with thought and reflection; it is equally clear that there ought to be a corresponding difference in the branches of study to which they devote themselves. Things are done in half the time and with half the toil when they are done upon a well-considered system; when there is no waste and nothing has to be unlearned. As mechanical forces pressed into the service of man increase a hundred-fold and more his bodily strength, so does the use of method,—of all the methods which science has already invented, (for as actions are constantly passing into habits, so is science always being converted into method)—of all the methods which an individual can devise for himself, enlarge and extend the mind. And yet how rarely does any one ever make a plan of study for himself—or a plan of his own life.

Let me illustrate the subject of which I am speaking from the sphere of business. Suppose a person of ability to be engaged in the management of a great institution—such as a public school, or a manufactory—will not his first aim be to organize such an institution in the fittest manner? He will consider how the work which he has to do will be carried on in the shortest time, at the least cost and with the smallest expenditure of labour. He will see his own objects clearly, and from time to time he will apply proper methods of comparison and examination which will enable him to discover whether they are being

carried out. He will not devote himself to small matters which can be done by others. He will know whom to trust; he will seize upon the main points, and above all he will avoid waste.

Now there may be a waste in study as well as in business: such a waste, for example, is the idleness of reading when we sit in an armchair by the fire and receive passively the impression of books without thought, without judgment, without any effort of 'what we are pleased to call "our minds."' We may learn Latin and Greek in such a manner that we never acquire any real sense of the meaning of words or constructions, but only remember how they are to be translated in a particular passage. Can this be called education? So we may learn history in such a fashion that we only recollect dates and facts and have no sense of the laws which pervade it, or interest in the human beings who are the actors in it: Is not this again a waste of time? Lastly, in philosophy, that study which has so great an interest for us at a certain time of life, which makes a sort of epoch in the mental history of many, from which we are likely to experience the greatest good and the greatest harm; in philosophy we may go on putting words in the place of things, unlearning instead of learning, losing definiteness and clearness in the extent of the prospect opening upon us, until we are fairly overmastered by it, seeming to have acquired new powers of thought so vast that they prevent us from thinking

for ourselves, or expressing ourselves like other men :
'And this also is vanity.'

I have not attempted in the compass of a short sermon to enumerate all the difficulties which beset us in the life of study: the sketch of a great subject is necessarily imperfect; each one must fill up the outline for himself. I will ask you to remember some of these remarks, not for any special value of them, but because they may lead you on to make similar reflections for yourselves. To most of us such thoughts rarely occur until the time has passed for applying them to our own life. Yet I know also how small is the effect of experience which they have not bought for themselves on the minds and characters of the young.

Lastly, let me remind you that study is a service, perhaps the highest service that we can render to God: it teaches us His purposes; it reconciles us with His laws; it enables us to see the truth more nearly as He sees it; it shows us the revelation of His spirit, in the lives of great and good men. Study is the greater part of our business here; and we shall hardly serve Him in any other way if we do not serve Him in that. At the foundation of all true study there lie moral and religious qualities, such as honesty, including accuracy, the disinterested love of truth, the desire to impart knowledge to all and to make it minister to the wants of our fellow-men. Is there anything superstitious in beginning our studies

with a prayer to God, either spoken or silent, that He would enlighten and strengthen our minds, because we are not seeking our own fame or success, but only His glory; that He would give us peace and truth, and allow us to cast the burdens of study upon Him; that He would enable us to keep the mind above the body in all the fretful nervous trials of disease, in the sad hours when our faculties are distracted? As Milton says—

‘So much the rather thou, Celestial Light,
Shine inward, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate; there plant eyes, all mist from thence
Purge and disperse.’

So we too may pray God to deliver us from the darkness of prejudice, from the false colours of sentiment, from the veil of self-conceit which so easily envelops us; that our eyes may truly see Him and our minds perceive Him in history, in nature, in man. Let us pray that the knowledge which we acquire here may assist us in fulfilling His work; in lessening the sufferings and helping the needs of our fellow-men; and lead us through the things of sense up to that perfect idea of goodness and truth which He Himself is.

XII

‘ MAN SHALL NOT LIVE BY BREAD ALONE, BUT BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDETH OUT OF THE MOUTH.

LUKE iv. 4.

THE narrative from which the text is taken is commonly called ‘ the temptation of Christ ’ ; it is found with slight variations of form, near the beginning of the two Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke ; and the subject of it is just alluded to in the Gospel of St. Mark. The externals of the scene which is described by the Evangelist are strange and unfamiliar to us ; we can hardly place them before the mind’s eye ; rarely, if ever, have they been made the subject of a picture. The powers of good and evil meet together in the persons of Christ and Satan ; in the desert among the wild beasts, at the top of a mountain, on the roof of the temple. The temptations of the world are set against the Spirit of God. The first temptation is directed to the bodily appetites : the Lord had been fasting forty days, and was afterwards an hungered. The power of evil taking advantage of the situation, says mockingly,

¹ Preached at Balliol, April 20, 1879.

'If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.' To which Christ replies by the citation of a singular and allegorical passage in the book of Deuteronomy, in which the manna or bread of heaven is contrasted with ordinary bread: 'Man shall not live by bread alone'; or, as the words are given in the Gospel of St. Matthew which follows more closely the original text, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' The second temptation is addressed to the ambitious element in human nature: 'I will give Thee all the kingdoms of the world if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.' To this suggestion of evil Christ replies, not by any counter-assertion of a divine or moral right to empire, but simply, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' The third temptation is aimed at that principle in man which is always asking of God for some external sign; which is the habit of turning figures of speech into matters of fact; which cannot be satisfied that 'we are safe under His wings,' just because the laws of nature observe the accustomed course: 'Cast Thyself down, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge over Thee.' Such a voice has been sometimes heard knocking in the breast of some vain or half-deceived prophet; Christ answers, for his instruction and for ours: 'It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' In all these answers of Christ we may

observe two things: first that they are clothed in the language of the Old Testament, and secondly, that in all of them the ordinary is preferred to the extraordinary, the spiritual and moral to the temporal and outward.

Whether this narrative is a parable or allegory in which principles of eternal truth have been personified, or a vision seen by Christ Himself and repeated by Him to His disciples—like that vision of Peter in which the vessel full of meats was let down from heaven when he too was an hungered, and he was taught that nothing which God had cleansed was common or unclean; or whether we are to imagine two beings in human form standing face to face with one another, is a question into which I shall not further inquire. The meaning and not the form of the narrative is important to us; and the meaning is apt to be lost in the form. If the life of Christ is ever written over again in our own age and country, it should not be as a history of wonders, but as a history of truths which seem to be always fading away before the eyes of man, and are always needing to be revived. It should not be critical, or sentimental, or picturesque, but it should seek to bring the mind and thoughts of Christ a little nearer to the human heart. To do this in the spirit and not in the letter, not rashly applying the precepts of the Gospel to an altered world, but strengthening and deepening their inward power

and life, may be the work of another generation in theology.

And now leaving these general reflections which naturally occur to us whenever, as in sermons, we seek to decipher or interpret ancient writings, let us confine ourselves to the words of the text: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth,' or, as the last clause is read in the best Greek manuscript, 'but by every word.' Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word—there the verse stops. The scope of the clause has been enlarged in St. Matthew's Gospel by this addition, 'but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God,' which is probably taken from the original passage in Deuteronomy. But I propose to consider the words in the narrower sense.

Could man be happy without speech, living like the animals in a kind of innocence, but deprived of any higher thought or communion with his fellows? There have been philosophers who have wanted to bring him back to a state of nature, who would deprive him of all philosophy and of all religion, who would have him give up the hardly won inheritance of ages, that he might be without evil and without good, that he might be freed from some of the anxieties of life and have no portion in what is best and highest in it. Such teachers should begin, if this were possible, by taking from him the faculty

of speech, out of which and by the help of which all his reflections on himself and on others seem to be developed. And again, there have been so called saints, such as St. Bruno, the founder of the Charterhouse, whose institutions and ideas still linger among us, who from an opposite point of view, seeing how language may be abused and how closely it is entwined with the mental faculties, have imagined that the tongue should be used only in the service of God, and have therefore denied themselves the blessing of daily converse with their fellow-creatures, as if the glory of God would be manifested by disusing the gifts which show forth His glory; as if without language there could be any sense or knowledge or progress among men; as if we could become the sons of God by returning to the level of the animals.

Human speech is also a divine gift, and so the two versions of the text meet in one. The more we consider it, the more wonderful does it appear. It is the outward expression of that reason which is the image of God Himself. Its origin is a mystery to us; we see only that it is the meeting-point of our intellectual faculties, from which all our inquiries into the nature of the mind must proceed, and through which they must be conducted. We cannot withdraw ourselves from it or get rid of it or imagine ourselves without it; it is the limit of all our speculations; it is also the source of them. The consideration of it teaches us to realize our place in the world;

it is the link which connects us with all other men in past or future ages. Though in many of its uses quite trivial, it is also the most wonderful of human powers, which we should sometimes contemplate from the side of its greatness as well as of common use. We must not lose or impair this glorious inheritance; whether we speak or write, let us try to speak and write as well as we can.

I propose in this sermon to consider a subject often spoken of in Scripture, the government of the tongue, as it would be called by old-fashioned writers, or as we may describe it in more modern phraseology, the habit of conversation. There is a sermon by Bishop Butler on the same subject to which I shall hereafter refer. The habit of conversation is often supposed to be a natural gift, which is not learned or taught, but like our native language itself can only be acquired by use. Children hear a great deal about the duty of silence; they are seldom made to understand the virtues and graces of speech. Few persons ever train themselves to speak correctly, or even to pronounce distinctly; there are some who will take pains to catch a foreign accent when they are only half intelligible in their own language. Many again are quite careless whether their topics of conversation have any meaning or interest for those whom they are addressing; they have hardly given a thought to the various relations in which mankind stand to one another; they have no discrimination or tact.

but speak to everybody in the same way. Thus the finer part of manners, what to say, what to avoid, is lost; and much of the grace of life and of the good will of men towards one another is extinguished. They are little evils of which I am speaking, but they are continually occurring, every day and every hour of the day, and when added up they make a great part of the total sum; and they sting mostly not from ill-nature, or from want of courtesy, but from want of thought and attention to a subject about which thought and attention are seldom employed.

If we were to say that a man's conversation must flow out of his whole character there would be truth in this. Every one knows that he cannot at any moment say just what he pleases; he is determined by his own antecedents and circumstances. But though it is true that a man's conversation is the representation of himself, yet it may also be a very inadequate representation of him. For he may be one who is not able to speak until the time of speaking is past, whose thoughts when he begins to express them are always getting into disorder, who is reserved and feels more than he says, who is master of a subject when he is alone, but never does justice to himself when in company with others. There are other causes too which prevent unreserved converse between one person and another. They belong to different worlds, they are cast in a different mould, their minds are set at a different pitch.

Society is artificial and they are afraid of infringing its proprieties. They are never sure of how their words will be received by those whom they address, for we are very much dependent on one another in conversation; the good speaker must have good listeners, and everybody must make his contribution to the feast. When in company, we feel that we are part of a whole, meeting for the purpose not of solitary, but of mutual enjoyment. We all know what an effect is produced in a room by warmth and light and air. It is something analogous to this which we seek to cultivate in society; the warmth of friendliness, the brightness of intelligence, and the freshness of sincerity. When the hearts of human beings melt, and feel kindly towards one another, and their minds are quickened by mutual contact, that is one of the highest pleasures of which we are capable. Such occasions are not mere pastimes; they really do good by bringing men together, and making them understand one another; they are days to be noted in our calendars. They make one family, one company, one neighbourhood, to differ greatly from another.

But how is this comparatively high social standard to be attained? If we look for wit and talent everywhere, we shall be disappointed; for they are not to be found in the majority of mankind. We must depend on other elements for the pleasantness of social life and our relations to other men. First

there is kindness—that is a language that has no conventions, but is understood by everybody, rich and poor alike. Who has not felt the difference between the atmosphere of one house and of another, the glad welcome with which we are greeted by one person at the entrance, while the mannerism or stiffness or self-consciousness of another freezes and offends us? When a man is thinking and caring, not about himself, or about the finery of his entertainment, or how he appears in the eyes of his guests, but about others; when he is really attentive to their least wants and sensitive to their feelings, he soon finds a way to their hearts. When he speaks to them not of his own projects or plans, or favourite notions, but about them and theirs, conversation soon begins sweetly to flow; when by the exercise of tact he can draw the reserved or the diffident or the young out of their shell, he will quickly find a response. He is twice blessed if he can say a pleasant or soothing word to the aged or stupid; to those who are troubled by some real or false shame, or from inexperience feel themselves at a loss in society. Such an one would be said in a figure to shed light in the dwelling. For kindness has a wonderful power of transmuting and converting human beings. And if a man, instead of always in thought coming round to himself, were always getting away from himself, he would attain a great freedom and enjoyment of society. The thought of self, with

which we are so much occupied, is really a burden which is weighing us down, a shadow which follows us wherever we go, a cloud which intercepts the light of heaven, a barrier which is interposed between us and our fellow-men.

A second element in a happy and healthy state of society is sincerity, and the mutual confidence which is given by it. We want to be able to trust the circle in which we habitually live. We do not wish to have the words which we have spoken in the confidence of friendship lightly repeated to all the world, or what was whispered in the ear noised abroad on the housetop; we would not be gossipped about, or misrepresented, or laughed at. We do not wish that, the moment the door is closed upon us, our characters, our fortunes, our behaviour should instantly be the subject of discussion, or that we should be sacrificed by our best friends to some biting jest. We feel that such practices, though not uncommon, are ignoble, and tend to degrade the tone of society. It is not that such criticisms or jests do much harm to those who are the subject of them (no man should trouble himself about what is said behind his back), but they tend to injure the characters of those who utter them. I will not say that we should never speak about persons, for such a rule could not be observed, and would exclude the most interesting of all topics of conversation. It is clearly right that we should learn from others something about the

natures and dispositions of those with whom we have to do, and that they should hear about us in like manner. No one will maintain that the characters of public men are not a fair subject for discussion. But yet, in speaking of persons, we should also be on our guard against many faults which easily beset us, against the petty jealousy of our equals, or the popular envy of the great which hears, not wholly displeased, of something to their disadvantage. A generous person, if a friend is attacked in a mixed company, will always hang out a flag of opposition; and will sometimes find himself betrayed into doing more justice to a political adversary than the strict rules of party would allow.

The Apostle St. James describes the tongue in language which we are unwilling to apply to the society of our own day. 'The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature and is set on fire of hell.' Yet there is an aspect of society to which this is not wholly inapplicable, though the words may be rather too strong for our nerves. When we see the slanders with which the characters of men are attacked, the groundless reports which are circulated about them, with the addition that there must be something in them because they are everywhere repeated, the incapability of doing justice to others, especially when they are of a different religious

sect or party or of another class of society, the levity with which great truths and the love of truth itself is regarded; we feel that a Jewish prophet might have a great deal to say against our own times. 'I said I will take heed unto my ways, that I offend not with my tongue'—for care is required in us all, lest we should unwittingly participate in these things, and, instead of raising the society in which we move to a higher level, fall ourselves to a lower.

The moral teacher who wrote the sermon on the government of the tongue already referred to seems to think that silence is the great remedy for the abuse of speech. And in a similar spirit we have heard it said that speech is silver, but silence golden; and of a great man of our own times, who poured himself out in conversation freely, it was wittily said that flashes of silence adorned his eloquence. This is one of the commonplaces often repeated in the pulpit and elsewhere, but which does not rest upon any real experience of life. For the truth is that any amicable conversation, however trivial, about the weather, about the crops, about the lengthening of the days of the year, about shooting or fishing, about buying and selling, is better than none at all, because it promotes friendship and good fellowship. There is nothing so trivial which if said in a certain way—an inquiry about a child, an animal, a flattering word about health or looks—may not be a token and assurance of good-will.

Yet besides the desire to promote conversation, there must also be the materials for it. Every person should have some subject of interest which he can contribute to the common stock. In one society literature, in another science, in another politics, in another business, will be the prevailing topic, and we must have some knowledge of them before we can join in the discussion of them. The temper of some companies will lead them to give or receive information; of others, to argue or dispute. Gaiety and seriousness will alternate with one another. If we cannot furnish a jest, we may at any rate possess the cheerfulness and good-humour which thankfully appreciates one. An ancient writer has an inquiry, 'Whether there is any impropriety in asking questions at a feast?' which he answers very sensibly by saying that if they are interesting to our companions, there is no reason why we should refrain. And we might ask in modern times a similar question, whether a man shall speak of his own calling or profession—the merchant of his dealings, the lawyer of his cases, the scholar of his books; and the answer may very fairly be that of Plutarch, that if such topics are likely to be agreeable to the company, there is no reason why he should abstain from the subject with which of all others he is best acquainted.

And there must be listeners as well as talkers; these too may give a charm to society. It is not an uncommon reflection that somebody talks too

much, that he has not allowed others to speak, that the words have fallen too continuously and uninterruptedly from his lips, and, as happened to the poor man at the pool of Siloam, we feel that he steps before us and unfairly deprives us of our turn. And there are others again who do not say much themselves, but have the art of drawing out their companions; who do not throw the ball but take it up, if I may use such an expression, and will hardly let the least word fall to the ground without a response; who are thinking not of themselves or of their own interests, but of the persons who are addressing them, and are finding out the subjects which interest them. These two extremes illustrate very well the true nature of social intercourse. In its higher sense it is not the creation of one mind, but of several; and there are many parts in it; and the humbler parts are within the reach of most of us, if we could only lay aside the weakness that so easily besets us, I mean the consciousness of self. When there is the temper of sympathy in us it hardly matters whether we say little or much to others in company; the friendly smile, the ready attention, the kind pressure of the hand, is enough to make us understood by them, and to make all things known to us.

If we reflect on the matter, we shall see that by far the greatest instrument of education in after-life is conversation. We may always be learning from

others if we will, and deriving from them some new interest, or some new element of character, laying up in our minds for constant intercourse with our fellows that greatest of all earthly treasures, the knowledge of the world. And this charm and blessing of human life is not confined to any one class of society; though it is true that the minds of men and women may be so absorbed in the toil of making money, and in the cares of a household, that they have no pleasant word to say to one another at the hour of meals or relaxation. But it is also true that a pleasant stream of conversation may spring up, coming perhaps more sweetly from nature, in the house of the artisan, or the trader, as well as of the rich and noble; and there may be real refinement in the one and the want of refinement in the other.

For children too there is no greater instrument of education than the conversation which they hear at home. It is unjust to them when nothing is spoken of before them but the trifles of dress, the gossip of the neighbourhood, the cares of the household which press too heavily upon the parents, the follies and vanities of the world, which are hardly apprehended by their innocent minds. They are naturally imitative, and a great part of their characters is derived from their parents. If there is no life or mirth in a house, the children of the house will commonly be dull and stupid; if they never hear subjects rationally discussed, they will not learn to think or reason;

if the world in which we live is allowed to pass unheeded by, they will be without interests, listless and unobservant. This home education which they acquire insensibly is as important as the more formal work of the school, and it is as much our duty to provide food for their minds as for their bodies. 'They do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth.'

But still something more than kindness, or sincerity, or stores of knowledge, or modesty and goodwill, is required to give conversation its true and better character. This something may be described as an elevation above the lower interests of life. The best feast would be spoiled, if the host and his guests only spoke of the dishes served up at the table; the merriest evening would have painful association, if it were passed only in gossip and scandal, and ludicrous descriptions of others. There may be laughter in abundance and yet we may leave the house with the sense of frivolity and weariness, conscious that we are none the better for having been there. But how is this evil to be met? I am far from recommending that we should introduce out of place virtuous and moral remarks with a view to the improvement of conversation. Sermons are for the pulpit; good advice may sometime be whispered in the ear. But the first object of society is not mutual improvement, but amusement; and through amusement, if at all, instruction should be given. The remark of another

may incidentally teach us a lesson, an anecdote may open new views into life, the presence or the words of a distinguished man may give us a higher type of thought or of character. But any one who went into society with the avowed intention of teaching others would be likely to do more harm than good. Then how is this higher tone to be attained? No definite answer can be given to this question, for superiority of manners must for the most part spring from superiority of character. Yet a few illustrations may realize to us what is meant. Why has one man weight and authority, another not? Why is it impossible to take a liberty with one man, while the levity of another almost seems to invite undue familiarity? Why is the licentious jest, the ill-natured remark, never made in the presence of one man, while another is always introducing them? Why does a single person often exert such a spell or charm over a whole company? These are questions which it is instructive to ask. Every one may answer them for himself, and in the answers to them may, perhaps, find an antidote to his own weakness or vanity, or unreality, or self-consciousness.

And still there is one drawback to the pleasure and good of society on which before I conclude I must briefly touch—I mean that mental malady which is supposed to be constitutional with most of us, and with which we are sometimes twitted by foreigners as being a national infirmity—the evil of shyness; so

small and yet so great a calamity, because it occasions so much suffering and leads to such constant misunderstanding. Who can describe in all its phases what in some one of them we nearly all of us know too well? It is not one mental disorder but many, and varies in degree and kind with the characters of individuals. It is afraid where no fear is; it is humble, and appears proud; it is sensitive, and takes the form of coldness and reserve; it is dying to speak, and can only think of something inappropriate to say. In its worst form it is like a numbness, a drying up of the river of speech, a lethargy or paralysis of the faculties. It is in most respects the opposite of what it appears to be; all sorts of false imputations are apt to be cast upon him who is the victim of it, and the acute sense of the undeservedness of these imputations in a sensitive mind greatly aggravates the evil. It is often caused in children by the appearance of strangers; in grown-up persons not less at times by intimate friends and acquaintances. For the minds of friends are not always perfectly attuned; and there is nothing more difficult than to talk to an old friend who for some reason or other is incapable of responding to us. There are some persons who are never at home, except when alone or with two or three other persons. There are others who have only the full use or enjoyment of their faculties in a large company. So variously are we constituted, and so many are the forms of this malady. I have enumerated only a few

of them. We laugh at it, but we must also sympathize with it, if we are not insensible to one of the real evils of life.

I have enlarged a little upon this curious mental phenomenon, because to be aware of it seems to be the first step to overcoming the evil. Those who are affected by it are apt to think it is peculiar and individual ; a little experience would soon reveal to them that almost all highly-strung natures are at times subject to the same feelings. They imagine that they are the objects of universal remark ; they fear that some awkwardness or mistake of which they have been guilty will never be forgotten ; they feel, and perhaps this is the most painful part of their trial, that they cannot adequately express themselves even to those whom they most love. Let them consider that all this appears very different to others, and of much less importance. The elder person who silently observes them will remember the days of his own youth ; awkwardnesses or mistakes, one or many, will not destroy a man's success or usefulness in life. Real affection will make itself understood though it may be silent and reserved. These are trifles which we are always tending to exaggerate. But the really important thing is that we should not pass through life in a temper of mistrust and isolation, in which we never attain right or natural relations to others, misunderstanding, misunderstood, overgrown by fancies which overcloud and darken the mind. Many faults

which are not to be considered moral, if they pass into continuous states, have moral effects on the character not less baneful than the most flagrant violation of morality.

And now some one may say, 'But in all this the patient must minister to himself.' The subtilty of the human mind defies analysis, and some of the hints which I have given, while applicable to one person, may be wholly inapplicable to others. It is a task which each one must take into his own hands. He must manage himself according to his temper and constitution. His success in life depends upon his social qualities at least as much as upon his learning or acuteness or ability. For who can promote or assist a man with whom at every turn of life it is impossible to get on? The happiness of life and the healthy condition of the mind also depends upon them; for how can we derive any pleasure from the society of others, or how can we learn anything from them, if we do not know how to approach them?

And still another person may make the reflection, 'That the tendency to think about ourselves may encourage that very evil for which we are seeking to find a remedy.' How can self-consciousness be cured by a still more perplexing consciousness of itself? And yet without thought no evil or defect was ever removed, no fault cured. Neither in religion nor in life is it always easy to distinguish

between the right sort of self-examination and the wrong, or to draw the line between the want of self-examination which leaves us in ignorance of ourselves and the excess of it which takes away the power to act. We want to make people strong, and we leave them weak ; to inspire them with independence, and we only render them more helpless and dependent. Acknowledging that this is a difficulty against which we have to guard, I will once more bring the subject before you in a general form.

The Apostle St. Paul, after attempting to make rules and to draw distinctions about meats and drinks, finally sums up the conclusion in the following words : ' Whether we eat or drink, let us do all to the glory of God.' And so, leaving the niceties of self-observation, we too may say, ' Whatever we utter, whether in jest or earnest, let us speak only to the glory of God ; let our tongue still be employed in His service.' We cannot always have the thought of God present to us, but we may feel in our intercourse with others some restraining influence, some inspiring power, coming we know not whence. When we repress the egotistical remark, the ill-natured story, the weak comparison of ourselves with others, the impure imagination, although we do not expressly refer our words to Him, we may be truly said to speak unto the Lord and not to man. When we regard truth more than the entertainment of the company, when we seek to do justice to others and feel kindly towards them,

then, although in a limited and imperfect manner, we reflect His attributes. When there is peace and good-will in a society, there He is in the midst of them; when there is joy on earth, then in a figure there is joy too in heaven.

And sometimes on the more serious occasions of life we may refer what we are saying to Him and ask for His blessing. When we feel that we need a higher strength than our own; when we want to be raised above the opinions of men; when we are trying to act fairly in some perplexed and difficult matter, then, in the crowd and amid the busy hum of men, the silent prayer may still ascend to Him that we may see things as they truly are, and that no indolence or cowardice or prejudice may prevent us from giving a just judgment or forming a right opinion. If for a moment we are placed on some theatre of display, it may calm our thoughts and give us courage to remember that we are still in His presence, 'Who makes the weak things of this world to prevail over the mighty, and the things which are not to prevail over those which are.' We do not, like a famous ancient people, place a skeleton at the feast: such morbid fancies do not delight us. But still, whether we are alone or in company, we should have a sense of the realities of life; and in conversation they should have a restraining influence. For not pleasure or society or worldly success is the main purpose of our being here, but the fulfilment

of the will of God. And over all and above all, beyond what we call circumstances and the realities of life, which experience reveals to us, is He Himself from whom we came and to whom we return. This is the thought which lightens our minds and eyes, which dispels our passing fancies, which by raising us above the world shows us how to do our duty in it, which in all companies and in all dealings with our fellow-men imparts to our words seriousness and consistency and truth.

XIII

*¹ WHETHER THEREFORE YE EAT, OR DRINK, OR
WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF
GOD.*

I COR. X. 31.

THESE words are the summing up of two controversies; one which prevailed in the primitive Church, respecting meats offered to idols, and which extended to the general relations of the Jew or Christian to the Gentile world; and the other is a controversy, which the Apostle holds with himself, concerning the different modes of treating the point in dispute, whether, that is to say, it should be decided, or left an open question. The first has long since passed away; the second is always reappearing, and has to be determined anew in every generation. The first controversy arises out of the conflict of religions or races, which occurs at certain times in the history of the world; the second (concerning the degree of liberty to be allowed) is inseparable from the very nature of human society, in which individuals have distinct rights, and yet are parts of a whole and members of one another.

The Apostle gives a lively picture of one of those

¹ Preached at Balliol, April 19, 1885.

conflicts, which have so often happened in a transition from the old to the new. The first Christians lived in Greek or Roman or Oriental cities; they dwelt among the Gentiles, but they inherited from their Jewish origin a horror of idolatry. What rule should they follow respecting the eating of meats offered in sacrifice? They went to the market-place in which food was sold, but here no distinction was drawn between the idolatrous meats and those which, according to the ideas of some of them, would have been regarded as unpolluted. The poor man or his wife would come to buy, seeking for the pieces of meat which were best or cheapest, or most suited to their wants, when suddenly an officious neighbour said: 'Do not eat that; it is some of the meat which was sold after the festival.' The person thus addressed bought or refrained from buying; if he bought, asking no questions, and even after the warning, still in the judgment of the Apostle he had not done wrong. And yet so prone are mankind to a fanciful consciousness of sin, that he might very likely become unhappy in his mind, and imagine that he was defiled. His neighbours would be terribly scandalized, and would denounce him to his co-religionists. And in the community some would side with him and some against him: thus would be parties formed; or rather they already existed; and a violent controversy would be stirred, such as often rages when the points in dispute are most trifling. Yet though

the occasion might be trifling, there was a principle behind which was not trifling. Should the Christian eat and drink with the unbeliever? Should he go to law before him? Should he be present at Gentile games and festivals? Should he intermarry with his family? Should he associate with him at all? Or was a world to be formed within a world, or one half of the world to be wholly cut off from the other?

And here begins the controversy of St. Paul with himself. He seems to be distracted between two opposite ideas or impulses. First, an idol is nothing in the world—a piece of wood or stone, a thing to be mocked at and had in derision. ('The workman maketh a graven image.') And yet, considering the spirit in which some of the Gentile feasts were celebrated, the idol must be regarded also as a power of evil: 'Know ye not that what the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice unto devils and not to God? Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the table of the Lord, and of the table of devils.' So again we are assured that 'all things are lawful, but all things are not expedient,' and that 'every creature of God is good.' But shall the weak brother perish because of thy enlightenment? Then follows the noble declaration: 'Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no more meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.' And still the doubt

pursues us; another voice is heard, which seems to come from another conscience: 'Why is my liberty to be judged of another man?' Why am I evil spoken of when I give thanks for what I am eating? Too strict a religion may be as harmful as too lax a one. For scruples may grow upon scruples until the unimportant takes the place of the important, and the whole Gospel of Christ, the Gospel of charity, of freedom, of truth, becomes absorbed in some question of vestments, or of position, or of the meaning of unintelligible words. We often talk of being on the safe side; but there is a danger on both sides. We say it is better to believe too much than too little; but the only safety is in the truth. And so the Apostle, having argued the question from different points of view, returns to a rule which he has laid down in another Epistle: 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to the decision of his doubts' (Romans xiv. 1. That is probably the correct translation of the last clause which is rendered in the English version, 'but not to doubtful disputations.') He drops the dialogue between the weak and the strong brother, which is partly also the conflict in his own mind, and finally concludes: 'Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.'

The conflict of feeling which agitates the Apostle's mind is a conflict of principles which is constantly going on in our own day. Good men may be fre-

quently heard saying—the one party, that we must boldly assert the truth, leaving the consequences to God; the other party, that we must not offend the weaker brethren. I will give one or two examples, before proceeding to consider the text in its more general meaning.

There is a good deal said in the present day about the disturbance of religious opinions, and we probably increase the alarm by our manner of speaking of them. In times of transition such changes of opinion are very natural, and men exaggerate the dangers of them; it was so at the Reformation; it probably was so in the first and second centuries of the Christian era. The doubt which arises in this case, is whether we shall speak of novel and exciting questions to young or half-educated persons, to pious women, to the poor. The poet has sung:—

‘Leave thou thy sister when she prays,
Her early Heaven, her happy views;
Nor thou with shadowed hint confuse
A life that leads melodious days.’

There is wisdom in this, but it is a one-sided wisdom. The same poet has also sung another strain:—

‘Ring out the false, ring in the true;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.’

Or once more:—

‘There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.’

Can we find any reconciliation of these varying utterances of the same mind? I think that we may. For we may argue that truth kept back is the greatest source of doubt and suspicion; that faith cannot survive without enquiry, and that the doubt which is raised may be the step upwards to a higher faith. And so we arrive at the conclusion, that truth is good, and to be received thankfully and fearlessly by all who are capable of receiving it. But on the other hand it is not always to be imparted in its entirety to those who cannot understand it, and whose minds would be puzzled and overwhelmed by it. What use would there be in discussing with a cottager the chronological difficulties of the Old Testament history, or in explaining to a child that the story of Joseph and his coat of many colours, which conveys so vivid a picture to his mind, partakes of the nature of an Eastern fiction? In human life there is an absolute principle of truth, and happy is he who seeks it out and finds it. But there is also truth and right, relative to the circumstances of men, to differences of age and sex and intelligence. And in their best form these two views will be found to coincide. While in the Apostle's phrase, 'strong meat is reserved for them of full age,' a wise man knows instinctively what he should say in different companies and to different persons.

Let me add an illustration of this subject, another example, which also comes home to us in the present

day. The two sides of the question which I am about to consider, correspond to differences of character, which render it difficult for one party to do justice to the other. Most of us rejoice to hear of the temperance movement, which has spread far and wide over the country. There can be no doubt that sobriety is one of the greatest practical lessons which we have to teach in our own day to all sorts and conditions of men. And it may seem unfair to criticise what is in the main good, because the movement cannot always be kept within the limits of moderation. Yet we cannot help seeing that this, like any similar movement, tends to become fanatical. When, for example, the rights of property are disregarded; when the doctrine is laid down that moderation in drinking is the worst form of drinking; when total abstinence is held to be the saving virtue; when the use of wine in the Sacrament is discouraged, or the attempt made to show that the word translated 'wine' in the Scripture means an unfermented liquor; then it is natural that many good people (perhaps the majority of sensible persons) should begin to ask 'Why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?' Or, to put the objection in every-day language, 'Why am I to be denied a glass or two of wine because another will abuse the licence?' And yet the forcible words of St. Paul will also be heard sounding in our ears: 'If wine make my brother so offend, I will drink no more wine while the world

standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.' And still we have not got rid of the difficulty. For objections meet us from the opposite side ; we ask ourselves : Is it a good thing to place restrictions on human liberty, which are moreover sure to be evaded ? Is it well that the attention of men should be directed to one question only which stops the way, while the rest of politics is neglected ? Or that the lives and characters of men should be estimated by their zeal in the cause of temperance ? A distinguished prelate once said, 'Better England free than sober.' And, though we cannot altogether subscribe to these words, for Englishmen will never be free, in the true sense of the term, until they are sober, we feel also that they express a very natural reaction against the extreme views of others.

I have sketched the two sides of the argument, but do not ask you to decide in favour of either. May I venture to say to the members of the Temperance Society : Do not forget moderation in the use of words, or catch the fever of temperance, or become intoxicated with water. And on the other hand, I may ask of him who claims his Christian liberty, to remember that a great good can rarely be effected without some attending evil. We must set the one against the other. If we wait until reforms are undertaken only by men of sense and judgment, and are conducted only in ways which are approved by a refined taste, it is easy to see that the world will remain unreformed to the end of time.

Leaving now the controversial aspects of the Apostle's words, and their special relation to the primitive Church, I propose to consider them in their practical bearing on our daily life. 'Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.' The first of these temptations is rarely spoken of; the second, as we have already seen, is a matter of great interest, which is constantly discussed at public meetings, and argued about in conversation.

Of the first little is said, because the effects of it are not immediately visible as in the case of drinking. It does not reach the mind or find a way to the head in the same palpable manner. No poet has ever sung the praises of eating, except perhaps Homer, who rewards his heroes with 'perpetual chine.' No warning is uttered from the pulpit against it, except for the sake of inculcating what some deem to be a duty, the religious practice of fasting. Yet the subject is not one which we can afford to neglect. Satan lies in wait for many a man in the temptation of eating as well as of drinking. When we begin to grow old, then the remembrance of the slight excesses, hardly faults, of our youth returns upon us. There are many foolish things which we are apt to do at school or at the University, for which a time of reckoning comes in middle life or in declining years. There are weaknesses of constitution, scarcely perceptible at first, which grow and become formidable at forty-five or fifty, and which might have been conquered or sup-

pressed, if we had imposed upon ourselves the necessary self-restraint. Let me add another consideration. We are often inclined to eat most freely when we ought to practise the greatest self-control, that is to say, when we are exhausted by study or exercise. Yet is it not obvious that we are then straining our bodily powers, when they are least capable of undergoing the strain which is put upon them? Such reflections will by some be thought unsuited to the pulpit. I remember an excellent clergyman who denounced drunkenness in his parish. His parishioners were grievously offended at being reminded of their evil ways; they said, 'He should keep to the doctrine, that could do no harm.' And therefore, lest any one should think that such observations are inappropriate to this place, I will leave them to the physician, and merely add in the words of the Apostle, 'He that struggles for mastery is temperate in all things,' and that the body must be educated as well as the mind, and that the one is the life-long companion of the other.

At the dinners of the rich, at the comfortable meal to which we sit down, the silent thought of the poor may well occur to some of us. There was once a banquet to which the halt and the maimed and the blind were invited, when the rich stayed away. To us the pleasures of eating, to use an ancient expression, have no antecedent pains; our meals succeed one another almost with the regularity of

a law of nature; few persons in the upper or middle class of life, except from an accident, have ever known what it is to suffer from hunger. But the first thought of the poor homeless child when it wakes up in the morning is, where a breakfast will be found for it: he or she goes forth to beg or to work; and yet the life and gaiety of childhood is not to be repressed by the sadness of such an existence. There is many a mother too starving herself that her children may not be pinched with hunger. To the very poor the coarse viands of the cook-shop from which we turn aside rather with disgust, are delicacies which they cannot afford to purchase. These are reflections which we should not put away from ourselves when we thank the bounty of Jehovah for the good things which are spread before us.

‘Some can eat and have not meat,
Some have meat and cannot eat,
But we have meat and we can eat,
Therefore the Lord be thanked.’

Yet there is no reason why this natural thought of others should diminish cheerfulness. Not those who are themselves unhappy, but those who are happy, have the greatest power of cheering the lot of others. Notwithstanding all the miseries of mankind, we too may kill the fatted calf and make merry at social gatherings, with our friends at Christmas, on the occasion of a birthday, or of a wedding. But at other times it is well that our manner of life should

be as simple as possible. The Spartans, as we are told by Aristotle (though he says nothing of the famous black broth), were in the habit of partaking of the same food and of wearing the same dress. That is the true style of a gentleman, to be rather indifferent to outward things. 'Take no thought what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, or wherewithal shall ye be clothed. For is not the soul more than meat and the body than raiment?' Neither must we neglect the constant prescription of physicians to eat no more than will satisfy hunger. We should not educate the palate to niceties and dainties. May we not conclude, that any indulgence in food which tends to lower the spirit or clog the thoughts, which makes us conscious of our material frame, any excess which places the body above the mind, or impedes the intelligent exercise of the will, even for an hour or two, is in a measure lowering to the dignity of a rational being?

The other part of the subject is equally worthy of serious attention, whether we regard others or ourselves. Older persons will sometimes describe to us, not without a certain relish, the extent to which drinking was carried in their own generation, and in the times that were before them. It was a fashion which prevailed in society during the last century, and in the first twenty or thirty years of this. At what precise time and by what means this fashion was changed, has been often a matter of dispute.

A venerable friend of mine, who lived much in the world, used to tell me that the change did not begin until after the end of the French war, and that about the year 1830 it was nearly completed. And many other evil practices were changed with it, partly I believe owing to the revival of religion which took place during the end of the last and the beginning of the present century both among Dissenters and Churchmen. During the last twenty years a further movement has been made in the same direction, which almost entirely removes from the upper and middle classes the disgrace of drunkenness, and also indicates a great improvement in the habits of the labourer and artisan. In this conservative place, where the habit of drinking lingered somewhat later than elsewhere, the revolution has been most remarkable. We cannot be too grateful for the better feeling which prevails among the younger members of the University in this particular. There is no one probably here present who would not regard as a serious disgrace that which sixty years ago would have been deemed a trifling and venial fault. They hardly know how small a part of the delights of life they renounce, how many and great evils they escape. Speaking of Oxford, I grieve to think that I can say this with rather less confidence during the last three or four years than formerly.

Yet we cannot say that the temptation of drinking has altogether passed away among us. 'Let him that

thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,'—not perhaps into gross vice, but he may almost unconsciously allow habits to gain upon him, which are not conducive either to health or morality. He may daily take a little more than is really good for him. There are many associations besides the pleasures of sense by which we are attracted to drinking. The sparkling glass has been the theme of song in all ages. 'Wine that maketh glad the heart of man' is an ancient saying, which comes readily to the lips. Then there is the spirit of kindness and good-fellowship. The hospitable friend desires to give us of his best; he kindly urges upon us with modest words this or that vintage. 'Try this,' 'take a little more of that,' until we feel almost compelled to yield to his solicitations. It is not the good things which he offers, but the charm of our host's courtesy and liberality, that draws us on. How can he say to his guests, 'Here are excellent and costly wines, but let me implore you not to drink them?' Here 'the patient must minister to himself'; and what rule shall he observe? It is perhaps not possible to give an answer which is suitable to all persons. In one point we shall probably agree, that he should not obtrude his own manner of life upon others. Let him abstain altogether if he thinks better, but let no word or sign from him imply that he regards himself as a superior person on account of his abstinence. The difficulty of giving a more precise answer to the question arises partly from the varieties

of temperament or constitution in different individuals. Many a man has been ruined because he failed to observe that he could not drink with impunity what would have been comparatively harmless to another. A few are the victims of an hereditary failing. Yet it would be a great mistake to suppose that such hereditary tendencies are incapable of being overcome or effaced. We hear a great deal of the doctrine of heredity now-a-days, and there is value in such observations, if they teach us the direction in which the greatest resistance has to be made. We do not wish to ignore the inherited evil tendencies of men, but effectually to combat them, and therefore we must arouse in our minds the consciousness of freedom; not that blind freedom which supposes that in a moment of time any change may be made in our mental and moral constitution (which is as absurd as to suppose that by a sudden effort a man can fly in the air or by the lifting up of his arm stop some mechanical power), but that intelligent freedom which knows how great an effect may be produced by the continuous exertion of a very small force during many years, whether on the mind or the body. About the works of the machine we know far more than formerly, but this knowledge will be worse than useless if it paralyses the will.

The life of self-control is not grievous but joyous when we become accustomed to it. It clears the mind; it strengthens the judgment; it elevates the

character. It is the true freedom which places us above both our bodies and our minds, and so gives us the true use of them. In our own day the complaint is often made that there is less individual force than formerly; and this defect is often attributed to the want of opportunities in which heroism can be shown. But may there not be a silent heroism in refusing the glass of wine which is proffered to us? When we resist ourselves and public opinion, then only we become conscious that we are men. Not by dreams of virtue, which float pleasantly enough about our bed and about our path, nor yet by a sleepy acquiescence in the manners and customs of the respectable part of the community, but by noble actions, in which we fight against our own inherited instincts or acquired habits, can we hope to attain the great victory of life.

Shall I venture to offer one more suggestion which is suited to the case of many of us? It is this: that we should not make fermented liquors a part of our daily food, but reserve them for feast days and holidays, when we rejoice together with our friends and neighbours. At any rate we should do well to abstain from them at times, that we may be assured of our not having become their slaves. For wine mingles with the mind and heats the blood; it seems to take us out of our natural state, and to deaden rather than quicken the sense of right. The impulse given to the brain is capricious and unsteady; there is no real light or

force in it. Whatever poets may have sung, it was when they were sober, not when they were drunk, that their greatest creations were imagined by them. But though I offer these suggestions, I would much rather that every man should be his own teacher, and judge for himself in so nice a matter. 'Let every man do as he is persuaded in his heart.' There is his duty to himself, and his duty to his neighbour. The younger members of a society are greatly supported and strengthened by the example of their elders; the poor are greatly influenced by the rich. I have heard a young man say that, 'He never drank wine or spirits, when he went out shooting, because it was a bad example to the gamekeepers and gillies.' This is a homely instance, taken from common life, of a Christian action. I do not press any one to imitate it. Let every man do as he is disposed in his heart; he that drinketh wine doeth well; and yet those who are accustomed to the indulgence may be willing to admit, 'He that drinketh not doeth better.'

Like the Apostle, we have been driven about by currents of opposite feeling in seeking to examine a subject which touches human life very nearly. And like the Apostle we fall back on a general principle: 'Wherefore whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, let us do all to the glory of God.' It is surprising how difficult the duties of men sometimes become, when opposite rules are set against one another, or

when they have to be reconciled with differences of character. It is surprising how simple they grow when they are considered by the light of great principles; when, dismissing tradition and custom and the opinions of men, we are able simply to ask: 'What is the will of God?' If you can say that there is no will of God about this trifling ceremony, about this small dispute (for God does not interfere in such matters, but only in the greater things of righteousness and temperance and truth), the question is already answered: 'A highway shall there be, and a way; it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; the wayfaring man shall not err in it.' The Scripture is constantly referring us back to these simple and higher grounds of life in such expressions as: 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'; 'If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light'; 'Whosoever has the will to do the works, shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.'

So then the resolution of many casuistical doubts, the whole of many sermons, at last comes back to this: 'Do all for the glory of God,' that is, in a higher manner, in a nobler spirit. Instead of the busy, ever-recurring, image of self, which is always like 'a forward child' chattering within us, let the thought of God be present with us, like the sea, silent and unfathomable, like the light and air, living and infinite, yet also communicated by Him to us.

'Let us do all to the glory of God'—'not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but, as the servants of God, from the heart.' When we bring ourselves into that Presence, the temptations of sense flee away; when we lay our doubts and difficulties before Him, in the brightness of that light they are dispersed. It is by communion with Him, who is the essence of Righteousness and Truth and Love, that we are enabled to rise above ourselves. This is what the Scripture calls 'living to His glory.' The vision of God in His glory (not merely as in a picture, surrounded by angels, but in the higher form of mind or thought) is sometimes seen at a distance from the heights of philosophy, and sometime has a dwelling-place in the humble soul. If we attempted to describe it, we should fall into unreality, for we see 'through a glass' only. Let us think sometimes of the best moments of our lives, when we have been most resigned to the will of God, when we have risen most above the opinions of men, when we have been most free from the temptations of sense, when we have desired to look into the truth, and seen it so far as our earthly state allowed. In this way we may form an idea of what the Apostle meant by 'living to His glory';—of what Christ meant when He said, 'The kingdom of God is within you.'

XIV

*¹ I RETURNED, AND SAW UNDER THE SUN, THAT
THE RACE IS NOT TO THE SWIFT, NOR THE BATTLE
TO THE STRONG.*

ECCLES. ix, 11.

*SO THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST AND THE FIRST
LAST; FOR MANY BE CALLED, BUT FEW CHOSEN.*

MATT. xx. 16.

It has been common to apply the words of Scripture in senses which were not present to the minds of those who wrote or uttered them. Besides the original meaning, other meanings or uses of them have sprung up, which have been hardly less important. They have served not only as rules of life but as vehicles or expressions of the higher thoughts of mankind. They have stamped the literature of Christendom, which may be said to have been created out of them. The new meaning which was brought to them and was shown through them, the truth in the heart of men which was infused into them, has inspired the nations of Europe and been the light of other ages. Such an enlargement of ancient and sacred words appears to be natural and necessary. The world would soon have outgrown the religious books of its child-

¹ Preached at Balliol, October 12, 1879.

hood if there were no power of adapting them to new wants and circumstances. And such a use of them has the authority of Scripture. For is not the Old Testament, according to the well-known saying of Augustine, revealed in the New, and the New Testament concealed in the Old? And the sacred books of all nations, in so far as they retain any life or power, have experienced a similar adaptation. They mean, or are made to mean, more than the authors of them ever knew, or could have conceived. There is a new truth which is also old, another commandment which was given from the beginning. This is the progress of religious thought which is ever widening as years go on; which clothes itself in many solemn and expressive formulas, in many poetical figures, in many types and symbols taken from an older dispensation. It transmutes what is local and national into what is spiritual and universal. It is not merely the words of the Bible as they may be interpreted by the philological critic, but the words of the Bible as they have been enriched by the minds of men in all ages, as they have reflected their highest thoughts and feelings, as they have been lighted up by the lessons of human history, as they have been interpreted by experience, which have been the living word of God, bringing forth fruit in the world.

There seems to be no objection to that manner of adapting Scripture which is so widely prevalent in religious writings, if we distinguish, as with our present

knowledge we ought to do, between the adaptation and the original meaning. We are not making Scripture signify what we please, we are only endeavouring to read it by the light of our own highest thoughts, or seeking to find in it their best and truest expression. And therefore I shall make no apology for employing either of the two texts which are placed at the head of this sermon in a somewhat different sense from that which they bear in their original connexion.

The first is taken from the book of Ecclesiastes, and is one of the aspects of human life which passed before the eyes of the Preacher. 'Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher: all is vanity.' This is the mind or thought within him which he brings to the contemplation of the world. In this spirit he makes the reflection of the text: 'The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.' He does not mean to say that the weak may sometimes succeed when the strong fail, or that the slow may sometimes outrun the swift; still less did he rise to the elevation of St. Paul, that strength may be perfected in weakness. The drift of his reflection is no more than this: that both the strong and the weak are the sport of fortune; 'time and chance happeneth to them all.' But we have not learned from the Gospel of Christ this doctrine of despair, though the temper or circumstances of some persons may incline them to believe it. The New Testament, speaking in the pre-scientific age, teaches the opposite lesson, that

‘even the hairs of our head are all numbered.’ And science repeats the same thought when it assures us that the least things in this world, as well as the greatest, including our own thoughts, cannot escape from the domain of law.

The second of the two texts which is prefixed to this discourse is taken from the ‘Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard.’ In that parable occurs the expression ‘the eleventh hour,’ that word of warning which has passed into popular language, and seems to be always finding an echo in the heart of man. The general meaning of the parable may be summed up as follows: Religion is not altogether a service of time, is not to be reckoned by hours, but there may be a service of God limited to one hour only, which is so absolute and devoted as to be more acceptable to Him than a whole life passed, perhaps with a reasonable self-satisfaction, in the customary forms or works of religion. Some of the labourers in the vineyard not unnaturally exclaim against this new and unheard-of doctrine, which to them seems to involve a kind of injustice; their feeling is one akin to the indignation which is expressed by the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal at the father’s reception of his returning son. Thus far all is clear. But the words which remain, ‘For many be called, but few chosen,’ are hardly consistent with the rest of the parable, unless we suppose that the labourers who had borne the

burden and heat of the day are finally refused. We should rather have expected that they would have received some mild and conciliating rebuke, like that given to the elder son of whom I was just now speaking : ' It was meet that we should rejoice,' and ' Son, thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine.' The severity of the Lord of the Vineyard seems to be out of harmony with the character of him who came to save that which was lost. But the words, like many other words of the Gospel, are repeated twice over ; they are appended also to the parable of the Wedding Feast, into which there came among the guests a man not having on a wedding garment, where their meaning is appropriate and obvious. And I think we are justified in saying that this is their true place, because here they agree with the connexion, and receive a clear and apposite meaning. As we might say : ' Many are nominal but not real Christians ; many have run well, but have not persevered to the end ; many have the first but not the second call ' ; or they are the worse for having sinned against light and renounced that better state of life which they once knew ; they are like those of whom the author of the Hebrews speaks, who have once tasted the good word of God and the power of the world to come, and have rejected them, and can no longer be renewed.

Not dwelling further on the original meaning and place of these words, I will now proceed to consider

them in a more popular and general sense. Why are the last first and the first last at school, at college, in the career of after-life? Why do not the swift always succeed in the race, nor the strong in the battle? Why have some laboured all the twelve hours of the day and come to little or nothing, while others who have not undergone this laborious drudgery are suddenly inspired by some great occasion to which they have been found more than adequate and have then sunk back into the routine of ordinary life? Why is the fulfilment often so different from the promise? Why do great abilities often produce no result, while the slow growth of a very ordinary mind seems to gather into itself all the opportunities and experiences of life? Why does one man as he advances in years flourish like a tree planted by the waterside, while the leaf of another withers, and, long before his vital functions cease, he may be said in a figure to be dead and buried? Why in the hands of one man does everything succeed, while in the hands of another everything goes wrong? Here are many questions, or rather perhaps many forms of the same question, which to those of us who are on the threshold of manhood and just starting in the race cannot be without interest. I will sum them up in a word: What are the causes of failure or success in life?

But what is success? not in the mere vulgar sense of the term, as when we speak of men succeeding in

life who obtain riches, honours, great offices, or preferments; but what is success in the higher sense, the success of the mind, if I may use such a term, in which man is raised not only above other men, but above himself; in which he becomes more and more his own master and is not overpowered by circumstances, but lord over them? To be independent is one of our earliest and best ambitions, and independence is the beginning of success. A man cannot walk freely or carry out any plan of life who is always in anxiety about money matters. There have been saints and heroes who have taken no thought for the morrow, 'what they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewithal they should be clothed.' But we are not like them: and in general it is the better part of prudence to consider a little about our daily needs, especially if others are dependent upon us. Every one must measure for himself how much of external goods are necessary to him, what sacrifices he can make for higher objects before he enters on a profession, or a course of study, or a religious calling.' Let him not be facing both ways, or with one eye looking towards earth, the other directed to heaven. 'If ye have been unfaithful in the unrighteous mammon, who shall commit to your trust the true riches?' is a maxim of Scripture itself.

Not excluding, then, this humble care of making a livelihood, I will ask once more, What is success; and what idea of it shall we propose to ourselves?

To have carried out some one purpose or design during twenty or thirty years, to have contributed sensibly to the happiness of others, or to have kept a family together; to have obtained a fair share of this world's goods; to have added something real, if not very great, to the stock of human knowledge; to have been a good teacher, to have succeeded in a profession and yet to have risen above it;—whoever seeks or obtains any of these aims cannot be said to have lived in vain: as the world goes, he may fairly claim to be called a successful man.

There may be success of a still higher kind, of which I will hereafter say a few words. But speaking generally, the above may be regarded as a tolerably accurate description of what men call success in life such as we should desire for ourselves or our friends. And now let us put the question in a form which comes nearer home to us: let us ask not about the nature of success in general but about those here present—who will succeed or fail? We cannot tell: each one must ask of himself and answer himself according to the probabilities of the case and his knowledge of his own character and circumstances. We do not know who will be living and who will have passed away a few years hence; who will have been cut down as a flower, who will have attained to any real or perfect growth. I find it set down in tables that the average duration of human life at the age of twenty-one is about thirty-six years; so,

if we drop the average, of those here present, at the expiration of thirty-six years, about two-thirds will already have passed into the unseen world, while the remaining third will be living on and will perhaps continue to live on until they reach the ages of sixty, seventy, or eighty, and the like. We often hear in sermons of the uncertainty of human life; it is well that we should sometimes consider the comparative certainty of it. This thirty-six years, we may say to ourselves, is on the average the time which God allots to us for the fulfilment of our work upon earth. We may hope for a little more: we may fear a little less; but, speaking generally, thirty-six years, or about 13,000 days, is the time in which the task must be accomplished: and therefore we must rise early before the sun is well over our heads in the spirit of that great French statesman (Turgot) who, observing that his family had generally died of the gout before fifty, made up his mind before he was of age that he must begin at once if he was to accomplish anything considerable for the good of his country or of mankind. Six-and-thirty years are apt in youth to seem a long and interminable period. But yet, believe me, they soon pass away; and we may feel painfully at the end of them, that the task which, with better economy of time and with better discipline of the mind, might have been completed remains unfinished, and we are uncertain whether we shall still have the power to complete

it. Or, if you like to do the same for later life, we are told by those who make such calculations their business that every one may probably live half the number of years by which his age falls short of eighty-four. That is what is called the expectation of human life. We may see then how it stands with us at thirty, at forty, at fifty, at sixty: we may reckon up the time that is left for accomplishing the task which is entrusted to us. And we may still hope that of what remains to be done in life a good deal may be effected; remembering too that this calculation of days and years, though a useful aid to reflection, is a part of the truth only: we know that such computations are to a certain extent fallacious: for all days are not the same in value or in use; there are occasions when human spirits rise above themselves; and an eleventh hour at which the battle may be lost or won.

There is a more important question than who will be alive at the end of thirty-six years: what will they be doing? Some, if I may judge from the analogy of the past, will have succeeded in life; they will have risen to high positions; they will have made or inherited large fortunes; they may be leading men in the political world, or have become eminent in literature. Will they have attained to anything like real success? That depends upon the spirit in which they have lived. Will they have regarded riches and honours and a great worldly position as an end, or

only as a means? It has not been uncommon for the ambitious man, just as he has mounted the highest step of the ladder, to discover for the first time that 'This also is vanity.' Nor is there anything more laughable or sad than the sight of a man raised to a high position for which he is unfitted. That only is true success in which the mind develops and expands with the larger opportunity.

There will be others again, not the less happy because they are unknown to fame, plodding along the level road; some one perhaps as a country clergyman. Will he differ from the ordinary clergyman, who has many virtues not to be despised, who does his clerical duty carefully and punctually, who brings up a family respectably, who drives about in a humble vehicle, and is always seeking in vain to better his condition? Or will he and his wife set an example of poverty which, in the spirit of the old saints whom I mentioned before, makes light of earthly considerations? Will they be living for others, and especially for the poor? Will they educate a parish and breathe a better life into it? Will they show that the grace and refinements of an English gentleman's home does not depend on expensive luxuries, or on many servants? Will they reflect all the prejudices and narrownesses of the clerical order? or will some natural touch of feeling, some higher light from heaven, enable them to live in equal charity with Dissenters and Churchmen? And some again of

those whom I see before me are intending to be teachers,—a noble profession, if a man is fitted for it by moral and intellectual gifts and will throw his whole heart into it; and also the most dreary and dishonest of professions, if undertaken only for the love of gain or for the hope of preferment. Thirty years hence those who may choose this walk of life will begin to think that their work, whether well or ill done, should have an end, and they will be looking forward to retirement and repose. Let them try to make beforehand the reflections which they will hereafter make on their past life. They will observe perhaps how some want of accuracy or defect of knowledge, some carelessness or unpunctuality which ought to have been corrected in early life, is continually besetting them, and making their work less real and effectual than it ought to have been: the deficiencies and shortcomings of their school and college life will have told upon the next generation. And once more, among those here present there are probably not a few who intend to make the law their profession; and some of them will attain to the rewards which the law has to offer: they will be reaping the fruits of a career spent in honourable industry; their minds will be cast in the legal mould; and it may be that their high character for courtesy, for uprightness, for liberality, will shed a light upon their profession. But they must begin early and not look back; and they must not weary of the restraints

which the study of a great subject necessarily imposes upon them. Among those who choose the bar, there will be many, too, who have gone there without any definite idea of what they were doing and who will be mourning over a wasted and unsatisfactory existence. They will have made a mistake in selecting a calling which was overstocked, or for which at any rate they did not possess the necessary strength of body, or force of mind and character. Whether the mistake can be corrected or not will depend upon the possibility of their leading another life outside their profession in which they can find an interest or sphere of usefulness. They will not easily recover unless, like the virtuous man in Aristotle's *Ethics* who has fallen into misfortune, they are¹ *μεγάλων καὶ καλῶν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς γενόμενοι ἐπήβολοι*. And then they will be subjected to more trials when they see others passing them in the race, and feel their own circumstances narrowed and their hopes darkened. From such difficulties a man can only be delivered by his own courage and patience; he may remember that this world is not all, and that for those who are failures in this life there may be reserved a new beginning in the life to come.

There is nothing sadder in this world than the lost or wasted lives of men; sadder to the eye which is able to discern them than poverty or death. Those who are the sufferers in this generally retain a life-

¹ Capable in themselves of things great and noble.

long delusion about them, viz. that they are caused by anybody's fault rather than their own. And they do in fact arise commonly not out of any great fault or crime but from ignorance of the world or want of conduct, or neglect of opportunities which never recur. Who has not met with the helpless half-intelligent man full of many schemes, who in middle life has nothing to do, and is soliciting his friends to obtain for him an office which he is unfitted to hold, that he and his family may have the means of support! ('Put me into one of the priest's offices that I may eat a piece of bread.') Many who have shown promise at the University have degenerated into the meaner sort of literary writers. I will not dwell longer on a painful subject: it will be better to consider some of the reasons why such lamentable failures occur, and how they may be avoided.

First among the causes of them may be reckoned the loss of opportunities: Like the seeds which are carried by the wind, or by the flight of insects from one plant to another, enough of them come to almost every one, but we do not observe or use them. The importance of certain years of life is frequently not recognized until they have passed away. If there has been no sowing or planting, there can be no harvest. If we have done nothing for ourselves between fifteen and twenty-five, we cannot do much in the ten years that follow; I am loth to say that a man cannot improve at any age, but the effort is more

severe, and the gates are generally closed to him. The Universities offer great opportunities, not only for acquiring knowledge, but for making friends of the best sort, for gaining honest distinction, for rising out of poverty and obscurity. Let us cherish them: for they will never return in our whole lives. A reputation such as may be made here, not only for intellectual merit, but for character, honesty, unselfishness, will always last, and will not leave a man altogether friendless in the struggle of life.

Others fail after they leave the University. They do not understand that the time has arrived when they can be no longer led or guided by another, but must have a plan and purpose of their own. They are of hothouse growth, 'reared in the shade' according to the Greek saying, and cannot bear to be transplanted into the open air. They are wanting in energy and, instead of fighting their way to eminence, they sink into discontent and isolation. They read books but they do not know how to make use of them. They are equal to the composition of a prize poem, but not to any more serious literary effort; often, in consequence of some imaginary slight, they become alienated from the friends whose assistance they most need. In the din of a great metropolis amid the keen rivalries of professional life, why should others seek them out when they shrink into themselves? This is a hard saying: and yet it may be as well, while we are standing on the edge and before we

take the plunge, that we should look some of its realities in the face.

A common cause of failure is ignorance of the world. The last thing which some persons acquire is that experience of life which is necessary to take them safely through it. They do not know the characters of those with whom they have to deal; they allow themselves to be entangled; they are unable to protect themselves against intruders; they are wanting in self-control and good temper. This inexperience of life sometimes proceeds from simplicity, more often from some weakness and vanity which, by interposing the image of self, takes away the natural insight into human character. To walk safely in the world we must know it: and there is perhaps no subject of thought or conversation more interesting than the natures and dispositions of men. Yet should this knowledge of human nature not be after the manner of the cynic who has an eye only for the weaknesses and follies of his fellow creatures and ever inclined to the worse interpretation of them, but a knowledge which seeks rather to imitate the example of him who knew what was in man and yet loved him to the end.

Another common cause of failure is a want of the sense of proportion, that famous art of measure which the Greek philosopher taught, the art of measuring things in their relation to ourselves and in relation to one another. Men aim at what is beyond them when

they might have been useful and valuable in a more humble way of life. They have dreams of ambition which might have been a stimulus to them, if they had ever thought seriously of the means by which their dreams were to be realized. They have believed that they were intended by nature to be poets, and they had really probably enough of the poetical temperament to make them admirers or feeble imitators of others. But they did not consider how great was the interval between the appreciation of poetry and the force and fire of genius. Others fancy that they will become great authors or great scholars, when they might have been good teachers. Others are so constituted that they overlook the obvious and seize upon the remote; they lose themselves in paradoxes and crotchets; this is not the stuff out of which sound lawyers or successful practitioners are likely to be made. So youth passes away in many illusions and mistakes, and the real business of life is neglected.

Other causes of failure I will sum up under a single one, which might also include some of the preceding — want of character. Men are clever and knowing and imaginative, but when they come to act, when they are confronted by realities, some hidden weakness becomes apparent in them which was not previously suspected. The thought of self is too present to them, or they are too dependent on others, or they live in a dream of sentiment, or perhaps their conscience is not clear with God and man. They are

paralysed by vices, such as drunkenness, which are known to themselves only, and there may be other sins which are even more secret and deadly. And so their character, like their bodies, becomes dwarfed and stunted and demoralized. There is hardly anything that a young man would not give to increase his bodily strength or his skill in athletic exercises, to gain craft of hand or suppleness of limb, or to acquire a noble and manly form. But what is all this compared with manliness of mind ; the strength which resists evil, the insight which discerns falsehood, the resolution which carries out a purpose, the patience which endures not for a moment only, but in the great trials of life ?

For besides the earthly contests of which I have been chiefly speaking in the preceding sermon, there is also a heavenly contest of which God only and the angels are spectators. It begins here but does not end here ; and it includes in itself all other careers of men.

The prize which it offers is not exactly greatness or honour, but something of another kind which we can only conceive in part. The ideal which it holds out to us is moral rather than intellectual, the freedom from pride and prejudice and self, the absolute simplicity of truth, the resignation to the order of the world and to the divine will ; and not resignation only, but active co-operation with them, according to our means and strength, in bringing good out of evil,

truth out of falsehood. He whose mind is absorbed in these thoughts has already found life eternal. He may be a cripple, or blind, or deaf; 'his home may be a straw-built shed': but he has learnt to see and hear with another sense, and is already living in a house not made with hands or of man's building. And this perfect harmony with the divine will is the best image or likeness which we can form of that other kingdom of God in which we hope one day to be partakers. The gold of the Jewish temple, the land flowing with milk and honey, the precious stones of the Book of Revelation, fade away before our eyes: they are pictures or ornaments, which may have a fitting place in the outward structure of a church, but they do not reveal to us its inward nature: neither is another world to be regarded as the mere negation or contrast of this; a release from its bodily infirmities, a rest from its sorrows, a restoration to its lost ones. We shall do better to conceive of heaven as holiness rather than happiness; as a state of the mind, not of the body; not the brighter light, but the purer affection, the higher exercise of the faculties, the more disinterested love of God and man. A future world is dimly seen by us, but what is seen is revealed not to the bodily eye, but to the discerning spirit. The child set in the midst, the sufferer who never complains, the pure heart in which there is no alloy of sensuality, the intelligence which delights in truth only—these are

the nearest approaches which we can make to the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

The considerations which have been placed before you in this sermon relate chiefly to our earthly life, and yet they may receive correction and enlargement from the thought of another. For there is an eternal element even in worldly success, when, amid all the rivalries of this world, a man has sought to live according to the will of God and not according to the opinion of men. Whatever there was of justice, or purity, or disinterestedness in him, or Christlike virtue, or resignation, or love of the truth, shall never pass away. When a man feels that earthly rewards are but for a moment, and that his true self and true life have yet to appear: when he recognizes that the education of the individual beginning here is continued hereafter, and, like the education of the human race, is ever going on: when he is conscious that he is part of a whole, and himself and all other creatures are in the hands of God; then his mind may be at rest: he has nothing more to fear: he has attained to peace and is equally fit to live or die.

XV

¹ *HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH.*

HEB. xi. 4.

THE memories of the greater part of mankind soon pass away and are forgotten. They hardly last through a single generation; not even while those who knew them are still alive upon the earth. Others take their places and dwell in their houses; the old story of love and death is repeated at intervals in each family; the bridal and the funeral processions are seen coming out at the same door. We hardly remember the names of those who have preceded us in the third or fourth generation. And this oblivion does not arise from any callousness or unfeelingness of the human heart. It is the order of nature and of providence. One cometh and another goeth. No effort can detain the fleeting past. The grandchild knows its grandparents only for a few years, and to most men when they are approaching death their own children are nearer and dearer than their parents, because they are most present with them. Yet among the countless multitudes who have passed into the Unseen World there are some who claim a more

¹ Preached at Balliol, October 16, 1892.

enduring remembrance at our hands. One or two have a place in our thoughts from which they can never be dislodged. They may have been bound to us by some singular tie of affection, such as that which unites a mother and a son; or there may have been some one who in a time of trial or disgrace has been to us more than a brother or a sister, who has soothed us in sorrow or nursed us in sickness, who when we had gone wrong has led us by the better way and brought us back into the path of peace. The words of such persons make an indelible impression on us. Or they may have been some one of whom we fervently say, 'He was the best man whom I ever knew.' Happy are they who have had such a friend, though only one in the course of life. Their example is as a light ever shining upon us, and if we are about to fall into sin, the recollection of them is a restraining influence upon our minds. We desire too that they should be with us 'when our light is low,' or if they have gone before us, we would fain think that we are following them when we are passing beneath the shadow of death.

Such impressions of men who are better than ourselves are very remarkable to those who have experienced them. Still, they are private and individual only—a word or two whispered in the ear from time to time—not a great influence spreading widely over the world. They are not famous in history like inventors, or statesmen, or warriors, or

poets, who seem never to pass away, but to have a kind of immortality—such immortality as human beings are capable of. These are they who in the language of Scripture are called ‘benefactors,’ who would be more familiarly termed by us ‘great men’; who seem, in some way for good and sometimes for evil, to be raised above the ordinary level of humanity. They are, in a manner, mysterious to us. We judge of them chiefly by their effects, for we find a difficulty in apprehending the workings of their minds. One such man during the past week has been much in the thoughts of all of us, the great poet in whom the workings of so many hearts were revealed, who sang so sweetly of the simplest things and of the deepest, who, because he had suffered himself, was so great a comforter to others by giving voice and expression to their sorrow. I too had the privilege of knowing that great man. He was a friend of about thirty-five years’ standing, who once came to see me at Oxford, and whom I used to visit more than once every year in his own house. And I cannot go about my daily occupation as if nothing material had happened. I cannot but remember such things were, and were most precious to me.

Yet it is not of him that I am about to speak to you chiefly to-day. Our sorrow for him is a public sorrow, not specially felt in this College, but one in which all educated Englishmen may be said to

have a part. It was also a kind of triumph, for he died full of years and honours, in the vigour of his faculties, followed to his grave by the noblest of his countrymen. The sorrow of which I am about to speak to you to-day is not public, but private, or comparatively so; it touches us nearly, but at home; it affects this College, and I may say a great part of the University, but not in the same way the whole country.

One who was greatly beloved among us, the friend and helper of us all, from whom we parted at the end of last term, is now no longer here. We can hardly realize the fact at present. We still expect to see his well-known figure walking in the quadrangle, and to hear his voice talking, as his manner was, to some undergraduate friend; but we wake up, and it is a dream. His death is one of the greatest misfortunes which could happen to us. Hardly, if at all, among Oxford teachers was his equal to be found. Many of you have been present at those large lectures given by him in the Hall, delivered often from memory, in which the character of the teacher came out in so striking a manner; as has been said of another great teacher, 'behind what he said was himself.' He had ability, learning, eloquence, scholarship; and there are very few in whom all these qualities are combined. He had found out also that the greatest gift of the teacher is sympathy. He knew how to talk to one of his

pupils alone, which is perhaps the higher part of teaching, as well as how to address an audience. We have heard him make excellent speeches at the College Gaudy, full of wit and humour, in which some expressions are remembered long after the occasion which gave rise to them has passed away. But I will not attempt to draw a detailed picture of one whom you knew so well. Nothing would have been less to his taste than a studied panegyric of him. He lived not for himself, but for you and for others—that is enough. I am afraid that I did not always do him justice, because I did not altogether understand him. For he was quick of temper, and sometimes he tended, as I thought, too much to depreciate himself and the usefulness of his own work. We may be allowed to remark on such traits of character without imputing blame. They are specks in the sun, not to be weighed in the balance against a noble life.

The least particulars of the death of one whom we loved are interesting to those who knew him. We like to accompany his last footsteps, and are apt to say at each turn of the narrative, 'Would that this had been better cared for, or that some other course had been adopted,' and the like; but such thoughts are vain. Our dear friend was fond of climbing among the high Alps. He liked to be alone, or with guides only, rather than with friends; and in solitude to drink in the wonderful

scenes by which he was surrounded. He had gone to Switzerland for relaxation about two months ago—‘two little months’—and was staying from August 13 to August 23 at the Montanvert Hotel, which, as those of you who are Swiss tourists will remember, is about two hours’ walk above Chamonix, situated among pine forests on the way leading to the regions of eternal snow, at the side of the glacier. Our friend was always desirous of getting out of the beaten track and finding for himself new and untrodden ways among the mountains. On Wednesday, August 23, after making various excursions, he determined to ascend Mont Blanc by the Dôme du Goûter, the highest summit in the neighbourhood, having an altitude of about 14,000 feet. He and his guides slept at a hut on the previous night; they reached the top of the Aiguille du Goûter at 11.30, and started again at midday for the summit of the Dôme. Proceeding on their way for an hour or two they were met by a violent storm, in which they helplessly wandered about—‘à droite et à gauche, à gauche et à droite,’ as the guides said—until at last, about five o’clock, not being able to see in any direction, they dug a hole in the snow, intending to pass the night there, until the violence of the storm had abated. There was a danger of their being frozen to death, and they tried to keep themselves awake by singing and talking. The guides said that they could not sing, and so our dear friend,

though he characteristically excused himself as not having much voice, sang to them some English songs, such as we have often heard him sing in the College Hall. The guides, who were devoted to him, said that he sang with a loud voice, and had worked as hard as any one in digging out the hole in the snow. They had plenty of meat and good wine, but the cold was excessive.

The morning light returned, but there was no relaxation of the storm, and they could see nothing else. At last, seemingly in an impulse of despair, our friend darted out of the hole, crying, '*Il ne faut pas être lâches,*' and the guides followed him. But his footsteps soon began to waver, and he fell forwards on his face. They asked him what was the matter, but he did not answer. Wine was offered him; but he said in the voice which we know so well, '*Oh no!*' He went on for a time talking English and striking his thighs with his hands as he sat in the snow. Then he held out a hand to each of them and pressed their hands very hard. One of them said, '*Au revoir, Monsieur, tout à l'heure,*' for they quite expected to die themselves. They thought that he was commending himself to God in prayer, but they could not really tell what he was saying. He continued speaking in English for a few minutes, and then suddenly his eyes closed and he was dead. About half an hour afterwards the storm cleared, and they were found to be within

reach of a place of shelter. The guides did not suppose that he suffered any acute pain during his last hours. They were greatly attached to him, they thought him the pleasantest man whom they had accompanied in their travels: 'Il était amusant, il plaisantait.' They remarked on the consideration which he showed to them, as indeed towards everybody, and they were surprised that he could speak French so well. The master of the hotel at Chamonix said that he had struck him at first sight as being what the English would call a gentleman. I think we might be sure that 'he nothing common did nor mean' at that solemn time. These are trifles, but as I said before, the least things in which the character of a departed friend can be traced are interesting to friends. He was buried at Chamonix, in the cemetery of the English Church, on Monday, August 29.

So passed out of human sight and knowledge one of the best of men and one of the greatest teachers whom we have had at Oxford during the present generation. We were willing 'to rejoice in his light for a season.' I do not suppose that he will be forgotten by any of his pupils. Twenty or thirty or fifty years hence the memory of him will come back to them, and they will speak of him to the Oxford of another generation. He is with God, where we too shall be, some of us, in no long time—most of us are still young and have the work of life before them. There is no need to enlarge further on the circum-

stances of our dear friend's end. All death is sad, but the time and the manner of it do not make much difference. All death is rest and peace, deliverance from sin and sorrow—yes, and from our own selves, or from the worst part of us, that the better may remain. 'The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and there shall no evil touch them.' And so we return to earth and think of our friend once more as we knew him while he was still present with us.

There are some persons, and not the least religious of men, who seem hardly ever to speak on the subject of religion. They are afraid of introducing a matter so serious into daily conversation; or they are overwhelmed by the difficulties which have gathered around the faith of Christ in this latter age of criticism and philosophy; they have never disentangled the true life from the traditions by which it has been overlaid. They have a high sense of honour and right, and they do their duty in a manner which shames most of us. They know that God is good; and in their lives they seek to imitate Christ himself by going about doing good. But they cannot make up their minds to profess themselves the members of a Church; it would not seem natural to them. What shall we say of them?—that they are Christians? that they are not Christians? Shall we lay stress on the name rather than upon the thing? or shall we boldly affirm the familiar words of a poet

as containing the very essence of the teaching of Christian truth:

‘He can’t be wrong whose life is in the right.’

Or shall we adopt an uncouth term, which yet may have a great significance to some minds, and say that they are ‘Christian,’ but in ‘unconsciousness? Better perhaps to make use of the words of Christ Himself and say, as He said to the young man who had kept the commandments, ‘Thou art not far from the kingdom of heaven.’ And not only in this, but in many other of His sayings, Christ Himself must be regarded as what in modern language would be called a ‘latitudinarian,’ as e.g. when He denounced existing systems of religion—‘neither in Jerusalem nor in this mountain’; or when He affirmed that the true worship was the worship of spirit and of truth; or when He promised a place in His kingdom to him who gave a cup of cold water to the least of His disciples; or in the words, ‘Except a man receive the kingdom of God as a little child.’ There are abundant proofs that the faith of Christ does not consist in niceties of doctrine, but in a pure and holy life. We shall arrive at the same conclusion if we remark what an entire omission there is in the Gospels of many opinions and statements which are popularly considered to be an essential part of the Christian faith. The simplest notion of Christian teaching is that which approaches most nearly to His own.

I have made these few remarks with reference to our departed friend because he is one of those who must be judged, not by his profession of faith, but by his life. Probably he would have thought that the great mysteries of human existence, so far as they could be expressed at all in words, admitted of various forms of description and definition. He would have regarded man as having a better self, a better mind, a higher consciousness in which the elements of religious truth were contained. The lower consciousness is the sum of the material conditions of man's being, the higher is the spirit of God dwelling in him.

This conception of religion might be described shortly as the law of the better mind, drawing together individuals and societies, and reconciling them to one another and to God. Such, I infer, somewhat doubtfully, to have been the character of his own religious belief from the sketch which he has given, and in which he appears to agree, of the teaching of his friend and master, Professor Green, in a book written by him which is at once an admirable biography and a most interesting study of philosophy. But he would have been always slow to speak of such subjects; for, like many other good men, he seemed to stand more firmly on grounds of duty and practice than of opinion. He did not seek to penetrate into the dark places of theology, but whatever his hand found to do at the moment, he did it with all his

might. He had great simplicity as well as magnanimity; I should think that he never had a quarrel or an enemy. He did not care to talk of himself or of the College, and hardly at all of persons. He was very pleasant in society, though too much occupied with his pupils to take a leading part in it. He was a lover of music too, and had a great belief in its power as an instrument of education. Nothing was more beautiful in his character than his devotion to his venerable mother, whom he used constantly to visit in her sick room, which during the last few months she had been unable to quit. He was a lover of a garden in which he used to work himself, and it was pleasant to see him on a summer's morning gathering flowers with which to present her. So innocent and dutiful was his life in small things as well as great; like a breath of fresh air blowing to us, amid the conventionalities of society, from some truer region, 'like the dew of Hermon which fell upon the mountains of Sion.'

And so, dear friend, we take leave of thee; to-morrow we return to our accustomed work, bitterly reflecting that we have no longer thy counsel and experience, thy sweet example to be our guide. We feel that upon all of us there falls a heavier responsibility than hitherto. For about 640 years without interruption this College has been a home of learning and religion; during the last seventy or eighty years some peculiar distinction has attached to it of which

we are proud ; or rather, I would say, it has grown up, we cannot tell how, by the blessing of God, by the self-devotion of generations who have preceded us.

The care of this inheritance is now entrusted to us, and we must pray and strive that we prove ourselves worthy of it, and maintain its fair fame by diligence, by endurance, by energy, by union with one another, by outward decorum and courtesy, by inward purity of life, so that it may be truly, and not in name only, a Christian society. Would that every one in after-life could look back upon the three or four years which he has spent at the University as having set their mark upon him of happiness and good. During the last ten years this College has been singularly tried by the loss of several of its most eminent members. Yet there have not been wanting others who have filled up the breach. And we pray God that the loss of our dear brother, which has been so grievous to us, may not be without fruit by awaking in our minds a deeper sense of the obligation which lies upon us, and of the blessings which we enjoy in this place.

XVI

¹ *AND AS HIS CUSTOM WAS, HE WENT INTO THE
SYNAGOGUE ON THE SABBATH DAY.*

LUKE iv. 18.

THE worship of the Synagogue was widely spread among the Jews in the time of our Lord. As in all the Eastern religions, there had sprung up among them a moral teaching independent of the ceremonial which was consecrated by tradition. This was partly based on the language of the prophets, who from the times of Micah and Isaiah, seven hundred years before, had denounced ritualism in words which must have sounded strangely in the ears of Jewish kings and priests, and which are almost too strong for us to bear in the present day ('Bring no more vain oblations: your new moons and Sabbaths are an abomination.' 'It is iniquity, even the solemn meeting'). The force of these utterances had passed away; we are not to suppose that they were constantly in the mouths of the Gamaliels or Hillels of the day, who probably had their modes of reconciling them to existing institutions. But still the Synagogues represented something different from the old worship of the temple and tabernacle; it

¹ Preached at Balliol in 1875.

belonged to another age, and although the smoke of the evening sacrifice still went up as in the days of Solomon, yet in the minds of men the sacrifices had become figures and symbols. A religion of words and ideas had taken the place of external rites and teachers and preachers of priests and Levites.

Into one of these Synagogues, which seem to have been erected in every large town, Christ, as His custom was, entered on the Sabbath day and taught the people. What would we not have given to have heard 'the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth'; or even to have had them reported to us exactly as they were spoken! The discourses of Christ in the Gospel are but fragments of His entire teaching; these words which have been the light of the world occupy altogether but a few pages. And we are reminded of the singular remark which occurs at the end of the fourth Gospel: 'Many other things Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books which should be written.' Any history, any record of a life is necessarily imperfect: while the oral traditions remain, there is often no interest in collecting them or writing them down: too late, care begins to be taken, and for ages afterwards the minds of men are occupied in recovering fragments, in reasoning about disputed meanings of words, or reconciling contradictory statements. In the middle of the second century there is no reason to suppose

that anything more was known of the apostolic age than is now contained in the Gospels and Epistles. Still these difficulties do not prevent us from obtaining a living image of the spirit and teaching of Christ, as He spoke to His disciples of His Father and their Father, of His God and their God. Even of the outward manner and circumstances of His life, though these are not so important as is sometimes imagined, the recollection has been preserved to other ages. We can still read how He went up alone into a mountain to pray; how He taught the people out of a boat on the lake of Gennesareth; how at Jerusalem He was wont to resort to a garden on the opposite side of the valley, whither, after He had sung a hymn shortly before His death, He retired with His disciples; how He entered into the Synagogues, as His custom was, on the Sabbath day, and then expounded to the people the words of the prophet Isaiah which He applied to Himself.

The custom of meeting together, not on the Sabbath, but on the first day of the week, seems to have existed among Christians from the earliest times. Before the end of the second century simple forms of celebrating the Communion had become fixed among them. Even in the New Testament, though there is no trace of a regular hierarchy, or of a distinction between the clergy and laity, nor any mention of a form of worship, yet we may observe that the assembling of the disciples on Sunday is a custom

already in use. On the first day of the week they came together and brake bread, and Paul preached to them; and he exhorts the Corinthian Christians to make a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem on the first day of the week. Thus probably older than the New Testament, older than the institution of Episcopacy or of any other form of Church government, is that custom of public worship on Sundays, which after the example of Christ and the Apostle St. Paul we still continue. For more than eighteen hundred years there has never been a Sunday in which Christians have not met together; sometimes in days of persecution, when the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, at other times in gorgeous edifices reared by the munificence of princes, amid ceremonial pomp and splendour; in an upper room where two or three are gathered together, in the poor brick buildings of our Wesleyan or Dissenting brethren, in cathedrals like Cologne or Milan, filled from end to end with a sea of worshippers. There is no Christian structure now existing in the world which has lasted eighteen centuries, but the custom has survived them all, and certainly forms a truer link with primitive antiquity than any merely external memorial.

Such thoughts as I have been endeavouring to suggest have a poetical and antiquarian interest for us. We should not like to see this ancient custom given up, or the churches closed. The most irreligious man would feel that we had lost what we could ill

afford to spare. The sentiment of the past would still linger in his mind. But far more interesting is the practical question of the use of such observances to us. What do we mean by assembling here at this time to repeat prayers or to listen to a sermon? Is this merely a form which respectable people commonly observe, or is there some higher feeling which actuates them? What object does the preacher propose to himself? Does he imagine that he can say anything new on well-worn topics, or that in a moment his words will turn a sinner from his evil way? Are prayers and sermons continued only because they are customary, or have they still a high function to perform in the education of mankind? With many persons they are summed up together under the familiar expression 'going to Church,' a habit which, if altogether destitute of any thought or feeling, seems to be rather an act of irreverence than of reverence. Why should we waste our time sitting and meeting, or pretending to meet, if our minds, instead of engaging in the service, are wandering to other scenes of pleasure or business? A religion which is formal or insincere is worse than none at all. Not to do what we pretend to be doing greatly weakens and injures the character. I will not say this about a religion which is partially insincere, or deny that some elements of good may not be latent in the mere force of habit which, if once lost, cannot easily be recovered. In the worship

of God, as in everything else, we should be true to ourselves, and not use unreal words. We want to pierce through the dead letter and awaken in our minds the living spirit. And those of us who preach should be careful of saying more than they believe, for the sake of employing a customary phrase or of winning acceptance with their hearers. There are difficulties in having forms of worship which will be acceptable to all; nor can the preacher always please his audience. To some persons he will seem to be too much in advance of their opinions, while to others he will appear to lag behind them. Those who have been brought up in a different school of religious thought will be apt to think him unbelieving, or superstitious; falling short, as they would say, in his views of Gospel truth; those who have never considered religion, if they do not deem him a hypocrite, will denounce him as a mystic, and will be able to attach no meaning to his words. It has seemed to me that, with the view of clearing up some of these difficulties, we might with advantage consider the nature and meaning of public worship. What is its use and what are its limitations? and what are the feelings with which we naturally approach it?

The first feeling that we have on entering a church is one of peace and repose. The world is in such a hurry and is moving, as some people tell us, so much faster than formerly, that we seem to want a few minutes of rest, an occasional breathing time,

before we go hence. We desire to be with God, as we believe that we shall hereafter be with Him. Here, at any rate, the strife of tongues is hushed, the strain of mind is taken off, the cares of life are no longer immediately present to us: 'there is a great calm.' Here we pause for a moment in our journey that we may proceed refreshed. Here we are raised above the mean thoughts of mankind; we hear the words of the saints and prophets of old; we live for a short time in the nearer companionship of God and of another world; we pass in review the last day or two, and ask ourselves whether we are doing enough for others; we seek to realize in our minds a higher standard of duty and character. Here are revived in us those aspirations after another and better state of being, which in good men are always returning and are never completely satisfied, but which, like wings, bear us up on the sea of life, and prevent our sinking into the routine of custom which prevails in the world around us. Here we resign ourselves to the pure thought, to the pure will, to the pure mind, which is the truer part of our own souls, and in which and through which we see God.

The meeting together in church is not only a communion with God, but a communion with one another. Men come together in society and converse, and when society is happy or pleasant, there is a common spirit which draws them towards one another: their hearts are in harmony like chords

of music. And so we meet in church to express our common hopes and feelings, not like children who are disciplined in early life to sit still, but because such an expression of feeling is natural to us; and as we draw near to God we draw nearer to one another. The preacher speaks to us of peace and good-will in heaven, 'and oh that it might be so on earth!' We are taught that because Christ first loved us, we ought also to love one another. Here we are reminded that God is no respecter of persons, and that when seen by Him men are very different from what they appear in the eyes of their fellow-men, having their distinctions of dress and employment and their gradations of rank and wealth, and that the first may be last and the last first. Here again we receive a kind of support and strength from one another. There are subjects of which we do not often talk, for they lie too deep for conversation, except perhaps amongst intimate friends; of these we speak and think when at church—of the life after death, of our relation to God, of departed friends and relatives, of the common sorrows and joys and hopes and fears which agitate the souls of men. As in lower things, so also in higher, there is a sympathy of mind with mind which finds an expression in the public worship of God.

It would be foolish to maintain that we should be always attending to the words of the service, or that our thoughts may not wander to our own

individual circumstances. The advantage of public worship is that it is also private: any reasonable act of devotion may form part of it; we may offer up to God our studies, entreating Him to give us the power so to use our natural talents that they may be the instruments of His service. We may consecrate to Him our business, praying that the gains which we make may be employed in His service, and sometimes devising plans of charity or philanthropy. We may review our faults, begging Him to take from us all vanity, levity, sensuality, and to infuse into us a new mind and character. We are weary of our shallowness and want of depth and repose; and perhaps the very wandering of our thoughts at sacred times or in sacred places may be only an example of this. There is that offence which we needlessly gave from a foolish habit of talking; that trifling duty which we omitted; that antipathy we cannot help entertaining towards another, perhaps because nature cast him in a different mould from ourselves; and there are many other rough and crooked places in life to be smoothed and straightened. These shortcomings of our lives we may collect before God. There is no want of interest in reflections like these, though our minds are apt to turn away from them and it is only by an effort that we can recall them.

Then again we may think of any good which we can do to others, remembering them individually in

the presence of God ; not so much praying for them, as praying that we may be actively inspired to help them. There are some persons dearer to us than others in the world, and for them as well as for ourselves we may ask that this love or natural affection which we feel towards them may be converted into a fellow service of God and man. We may cast our cares upon God—that failure at the University or in life or in a profession, that loss of property which so unreasonably depresses us, that continual want of health which makes our days hopeless, that domestic misfortune or disgrace of which we do not like to speak to others. As in a family our parents are our best confidants, so God is our father and confidant in Whom we trust, telling Him of our weaknesses and receiving strength from Him. Or, once more, we may ask of Him to illumine our minds with the spirit of truth, with fairness and judgment, with accuracy and clearness, that in some way, whether by teaching or writing, we may assist in the education of mankind : so many topics of thought are there on which we may reflect and at the same time wish, for prayer is a time for wishing and thinking, not as some imagine a mere enthusiasm, or act of prostration, but requiring the highest exercise of the intellect, as well as the deepest affection of the heart. God does not demand of us that we should lie down before Him, like worms crawling in the sunshine, but that with our reason, the highest of His gifts, we

should seek to recognize the truth of His nature—that we should watch what experience teaches about His modes of dealing with us—that we should turn again to that image of Himself, transcending experience, which He has set in the human heart. These are some of the thoughts which rise in our minds spontaneously at times of public worship. We need not bend our eyes upon vacancy, or constrain ourselves by an unnatural effort to be always attending to the same form of words.

It may be worth while in passing to notice a difficulty which presses on us when we begin to think, but is not observed in the days when the use of a religious service is merely formal and conventional. A liturgy, like everything else, begins to be criticized; and then persons find that the spirit of this or that portion is out of harmony with their own feelings, or the requirements of the age. Some would desire more intense acts of devotion, such as they find in Roman Catholic prayer-books; others are offended at requests for temporal blessings, or at the too great precision of statements of doctrine which seem to go beyond the statements of Scripture or the limits of the human faculties. Others are reluctant to repeat the imprecations of the Psalmist against his enemies, and are justly dissatisfied with the attempts to explain them away. Others again are displeased at the repetition of the same confession day after day—for why, if we confess that we are miserable sinners, do we not

cease to be miserable sinners? or why, when we are unconscious of any sin committed or any duty unfulfilled, should we still repeat, 'We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done'?

These are some of the difficulties which beset the use of a Liturgy, to be outweighed probably by other and greater advantages. In our own Liturgy I am far from denying that there are many things which require alteration. No reasonable man supposes that our ancestors three hundred years ago, amid the controversies of the Reformation and the agitations of politics, did actually settle the government and worship of the English Church in the best possible manner, or, even if they had, that what was best for them is necessarily best for us. It would be well if we could alter some of these things, but the time seems to be past when the Church, though always changing at the will of individuals from within, will easily admit of any change from without. There is the struggle of the old and new, the impossibility of pleasing everybody, or of inventing a form of words equally adapted to the intelligence of the many and of the few. And though there is a limit, and perhaps this Church Reform is one of the duties of the age which we neglect, we are content to give up something for the sake of union. And then there is the difficulty of any form of words which shall be equally suited to the ideas and wants of all classes. To one

of us it might be said: You believe in fixed laws of nature, but what idea can the poor or uneducated form of fixed laws? His conception of God, like that of a child, is necessarily homely and imperfect. We may seek to enlighten him as far as we can, but the language of the age when mankind also were children is more suited to his faculties. Again, with reference to the Confession, though it might be better that such solemn words were not repeated day after day until they are apt to become formal, yet there is a truth of feeling in them which comes home to the religious mind, 'The best of us are doing so little and that so ill, in comparison of the requirements of God.' Our lives are poor and unsatisfactory, and the daily wish of our hearts is that they may become purer, holier, better. At times when we feel how we are under the influence of interested motives or of the opinions of others, how little we have of nobility or independence, we are tempted to say, 'Lord there is no health in us.' Certainly we do not value anything that we do: the better we are, the more conscious we become of our own defects; the wiser we are, the more sensible we grow of our own ignorance. We know that every good gift has come from Him and that He alone 'has made us to differ from others'; and our only desire is that we may give back to Him what He has given to us.

No doubt our Services would have a more Christian spirit if some passages of Scripture had been omitted.

Some of them may be regarded as merely historical narratives; but this explanation will not apply to others. We are not bound to give our assent either to the conception of God, or the acts or words of inspired men, if our conscience revolts at them, merely because they are found in Scripture or read in churches. Nothing has ever surpassed the Psalms in depth and purity of devotion. 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom then shall I be afraid?' Or 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want; yea, though I walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death I will fear no evil'; or again, 'Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, Thou art God from everlasting and world without end.' But because I find in these and the like simple words the highest expression of Christian faith, I am not therefore justified in consenting to the words of the Psalmist, 'Blessed shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us,' having learned another lesson, 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you'; or in approving the words of the prophetess, 'Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof'; still less in transferring these words to the enemies of the Lord in other ages, or to the religious party which is opposed to me. Nor when I hear the

narrative of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, who after the execution of Saul's sons took sackcloth and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, or the beasts of the field by night, am I bound to side with the superstition of a half-civilized age against the natural affection of a Mother in Israel.

These difficulties arise partly out of the entwining of the old with the new. Churches have generally looked back too much to past ages, without considering that they must also satisfy the moral requirements of their own. Hence they have often quarrelled not only with science and history, but also with the conscience of mankind, and, instead of elevating men to a divine perfection, they have fallen short of that natural sense of right and wrong which is inherent in the human heart. But without pursuing these reflections further, or considering how far in any system the difficulties to which I have referred might be avoided, I will now return to the main subject, and consider how far Christian worship may be considered as a part of a more general communion which God, whether consciously or unconsciously to them, holds with all creation.

For we do not mean to think better of ourselves because we attend the public worship of God, nor to divide men into good and bad according as they go to church or not. There are many in the present day who seem to be religious, and yet have no strong sense of right; and there are many who have a strong

sense of right and yet have hardly any feeling of religion. We who meet here believe that we have a blessing and a good ; but we do not mean to condemn them, or to divide ourselves from them more than we are necessarily divided from them. We are not certain that their lives, their love of truth, their disinterestedness, their desire to do good to others, may not condemn us in the sight of God. There is no man who is leading a good life who is far from the kingdom of heaven. And we must allow for differences of character, for dislike of forms and conventionalities, for reaction against early education, and not demand of every one that they should conform to the same pattern. He who has the love of God and man inherent in his soul has the root of the matter in him ; he who has any true love of man is not far from the love of God.

And, in the present day especially, when there is so much opposition of opinion among us, and our best feelings so easily decline into party spirit, it is important that we should also fuse our differences as much as possible, merging the narrower truth or practice in the wider, and not insisting upon the means if the end be attained. Prayer is an act, performed at set times, in certain forms of words ; but prayer is also a spirit, which need not be expressed in words, the spirit of contentment and resignation, of active goodness and benevolence, of modesty and truthfulness. It is the spirit which lives above the

world, in communion with a higher principle, which is always working a work ('*Laborare est orare*'), and always going on in the search after a higher truth. It is the spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice which aspires in some way or other to be a saviour of mankind. He who has this spirit, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether he be a man of science or a minister of a church, is a Christian in heart by whatever term he may be called, or of whatever sect he may call himself. For men are to be judged not by their opinions, but by their lives; not by what they say or do, but by what they are.

And therefore, although we value this privilege of Christian worship, we acknowledge that it is to be regarded not as an end but as a means. The end is not that, but a change of nature and the fulfilment of the commandments of God. The sense of duty, the love of truth, the desire to do good to all men, are not inseparably connected with the habit of going to church. Yet a man may also make a noble use of the opportunities of public worship. They may deepen his nature and character; they may strengthen and steady him. They may draw him towards others and prevent his becoming isolated. They may enable him to resist the temptations of evil, to get rid of levity and egotism. They may teach him to know himself, they may lead him to think seriously of life; they may enable him to preserve consistency, when other men are going backwards and forwards from one pole of

religious belief to the other; they are the natural balance of the amusements and excitements of youth, when the pulse beats quickly and the heart is eager, and the sorrows of life have not yet been felt. There is nothing in this which is necessarily formal or unreal or constrained. He who does not under some hasty misconception lay aside the habits of religion, as many in the present day seem apt to do, will find that they are in no way inconsistent with the love of truth. And he will learn, as years go on, that truth does not consist in a series of abstract propositions, or in systems of philosophy or discoveries about facts of science or history, but that of truth too there is a higher and more living image in the perfection of human nature—the likeness of God in Christ.

XVII

*¹ IF OUR HEART CONDEMN US, GOD IS GREATER
THAN OUR HEART, AND KNOWETH ALL THINGS.*

1 JOHN iii. 20.

THE Christian cannot expect to live always in the sunlight of the divine presence. As the brightness of summer and the gloom of winter pass into one another by gradual stages, as the heavenly calm and the dark storm almost in the same instant fill the sky, and yet the lilies of the field grow, and the corn ripens, and the trees put forth their shoots, not in spite of these alternations, but in consequence of them, so is the life of man subject not only to regular periods of growth and decay, but also to lesser changes from day to day and from hour to hour. For human spirits are subtle and delicate, easily susceptible of influences of light and warmth, to whom the world is an atmosphere in which they live and breathe, rising and falling and hoping and fearing, as the wind blows from one quarter rather than another, as the germs quicken or the dried leaves drop from the trees, as the world opens

¹ Preached at Balliol, probably about 1868.

upon the delighted vision or fades before the living eye, as friends welcome them or disown them, as God smiles upon them or withdraws His face from them.

This change of scene is not only observable in common life and among ordinary men, but quite as much, or even more so, among extraordinary men, who appear to be raised above the weaknesses of humanity. For they suffer and struggle more than others; they wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against ancient and widely spread errors, against the prejudices of nations. Those who are bent upon some great enterprise, or who place before their minds high ideals of truth and life, may often be observed to express distrust of their own powers, or despair of mankind, before they have nerved themselves for the conflict on which they are entering, or the course of life which they are intending to follow. The contrast seems too great between what ought to be and what is, between their own weakness and the vastness of the work which has been committed to them; imagination draws the picture, and the reality is so cold; or there is a struggle between their public and private feelings; and sometimes the shadows of the past envelope and darken their path as they are pressing forward into the future. The brave man may stand alone against the world, and yet in his own chamber he may be like a woman or a child, sensitive to every breath of feeling, the

creature of circumstances which draw him different ways. He is not, perhaps, on that account the less fitted to carry on the conflict; for he who would accomplish his work like a man must also feel it like a man, that he may be able to impart the feeling of it to others. Reason must speak with the voice of feeling, if she would find a way to the human heart. Hence in those men who have made the greatest impression on their fellow-creatures there has been a union of sternness and softness, of gentleness and violence, sometimes leaving the mark of inconsistency in their characters. There are many instances both in history and Scripture of this touch of human weakness mingling with a superhuman power. What greater earnest of victory can a general have than that he is beloved of his soldiers, who for his sake willingly face death? Must there not be real tenderness and consideration in the soul of one who thus commands the affection of others? And in another kind of warfare a like contrast may be traced. Do we suppose Luther in the retirement of the closet to have worn the same unbending figure as when he, the German peasant, stood with unabashed front before the powers of the Empire and the Church, and was found to be more than equal to them? His writings show us the trials of spirit which he had suffered, in what alternations of light and darkness his life had been passed, how the thoughts of many hearts seem to pass into his and find expression in him;

how in the later years of his life, when the victory was won, the retrospect was not always one of triumph or exaltation, but rather of exhaustion and depression. So St. Paul is depicted to us, in his own words, as having the sentence of death in himself, and therefore as trusting only to God who raised the dead. His apostolic career was a perpetual alternation of joy and sorrow, of glorying and humiliation, of life and death. So far is he from being uniformly governed by any single feeling, that we seem to find in him the expression of all our feelings at once. And at last despondency is the prevailing note, as we read in the touching words, probably written about the end of his life from his prison at Rome, 'Know ye not that all they of Asia are fallen away from me?' Lastly, do we suppose the earthly life of our Saviour Christ to have been passed in an unbroken calm and peace, as of one who was unaffected by the course of events, or who regarded with indifference the success of his own teaching, or the relations in which other men stood to him? That may be a natural supposition; but the picture given in the narratives of the evangelists is a very different one. He was grieved, as we read, at the hardness of their hearts; he wept over Jerusalem; he was sorrowful and very heavy; he was in an agony; for an instant the thought had passed over his mind that 'he was forsaken of God.' Yet a little while before he had said, 'The hour is come that the Son of man

should be glorified,' and 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men after Me.'

Human beings are not all cast in the same mould; nor was religion designed to stamp upon them one character. One man is always himself; another varies from day to day. One man is serious and grave; another light and gay. One man lives in the present, another is always recalling the past. One man has religion naturally on his lips; another man is silent about religion, of which the witness must be sought for only in his life. One man is social and cheerful; another shy and reserved. One man is moving on the surface of the world; another has deeper thoughts and feelings. One man is full of imagination; the imagination of another never extends beyond his daily work or business. One man is perfectly alive to the differences of character in his fellow-men; another man can never acquire this sort of knowledge by any amount of experience. One man is always thinking of himself and his faults and virtues; another man is wholly unconscious of himself. One man is always under the influence of others; another man is incapable of being influenced by them. One man may have great trials arising from his own physical temperament, which to another man are wholly incomprehensible. It would be tedious to draw out further the varieties of human nature as they appear to us, without including the greater differences of good and evil. If we add differences of age and sex,

which each one can easily supply for himself, the diversity becomes endless. No two leaves in the forest, when examined through a microscope, are precisely the same; no two human beings, when we come to analyze them, are exactly alike.

All these may be the true servants of God; all of them may equally be the true friends of man. Yet out of these varieties of human character, as well as for the variations of the same character at different times, great difficulties often arise. For one man condemns another because he is not like himself, forgetting that 'God fulfils Himself in many ways,' and in many lives of men. Another man condemns himself because he is not like another; he wants to have been made different from what he is, not considering that through this human character, through this physical temperament, he was intended to work out his life, and to be not another but himself. Another person is sad because he cannot control his thoughts; he seems to pass too soon from grave to gay, from serious to profane. Another person finds the memory of the past pressing heavily on him; he is always grieving over some unfulfilled duty; perhaps some sin of his youth returns upon him, or he can no longer see little things in their true proportions. Most of us in the course of life must have met with persons in whom trials of this description have become a sort of passion or fixed idea which refuses any more to hear the voice of reason.

Now to all such the text seems to offer a healing word, which is as applicable to us as to the first Christians: 'Beloved, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.' That is to say, 'You do not understand your own trials, your own difficulties, your own characters, but the God who made you understands them and you. The world which you inhabit may be to you a maze of perplexity: you may be living alone in a crowd; you may feel yourself the last person in the world fitted to endure the trials which have come upon you; you may be reproaching and condemning yourself for this or that error or sin: but do not trust your own judgment, which has so often deceived and betrayed you; trust wholly to the judgment of God, whose all-seeing eye takes in you and all your circumstances at a glance, who looks onward not only to the appointed consequences of your actions in this world, which seem to follow by a sort of necessary law, but to the remedies and compensations of them in another.' There is a peace if our heart condemn us not; but there may also be a peace, even if our heart condemn us, in the thought of a higher judgment at which many of our judgments on ourselves will be reversed.

There are two judgments besides the judgment of conscience at which we shall do well to arraign ourselves from time to time: the opinion of mankind, and the judgment of God. A few words on the

first of these may be a fitting illustration of the second; for, although imperfect, the opinion of mankind is by no means a bad rule of life when confined to proper subjects. The effort to see ourselves as others see us is one of the best forms of self-discipline. Does not the world make remarks about us, accuse us of weakness and imprudence, of vanity or forwardness, or sentimentalism? We shall do well to listen to the voice of the world, to let the opinions of our fellow-creatures tell upon us, and we should catch the faint accents which hardly reach our own ears: we should sometimes listen to the laugh of the world, which may be heard in a figure pursuing us as we go out of a room. Even the silence of other men, which greets our egotism or admiration of ourselves, may often convey an instructive lesson. Again, does the voice of mankind charge us with hypocrisy, or ridicule our unreality or affectation of religion—suggest that we are making the best of both worlds (perhaps unconsciously to ourselves)? That again is a judgment generally to be respected, which should lead us to try ourselves and see whether this hard school-master may not be teaching us a true lesson. And sometimes the world, like ourselves, deceived by appearances, may give us credit for honesty, for purity of character, for disinterestedness, to which in our own heart and conscience we know that we have no claim. So sometimes by contrast the opinion

of mankind acts upon us, and is generally a valuable guide, though quicker in discerning our actions than our motives, and supplying a rule of prudence rather than of true simplicity or Christian perfection. It has the advantage of being always present with us; and the good man who has stood the test of its ridicule will commonly receive from it, either during life or after death, a fair meed of approbation.

But the judgment of God is of another and a higher kind: He regards us not in this outward and superficial manner, but searches into our inmost soul; and some of the judgments of this world will be confirmed by Him, and many of them will be reversed. For the outward act by which men chiefly judge of one another is sometimes the index of the inward motive, sometimes at variance with it. But the divine judgment is the judgment of truth, which can never err or be deceived either about the main direction of our lives or about the least particulars of them. It is more searching than the judgment of our fellow-creatures, but it is also more merciful; for it is the judgment of love. The parent understands the character of his child, yet he cannot desert or forsake him. He knows all the circumstances of the case, and is not bound by any legal rules or fictions or conventions necessary perhaps for the good of society. The judge of man is also the friend of man, with whom there need be no concealment. If we could imagine some one who was

absolutely wise and entirely loved us, should we desire anything but that he should absolutely know us? False shame at the recital of our faults would disappear in our confidence in his goodness. Such blessed friendship and counsel there may sometimes be on earth, there may always be with our 'Father which is in heaven.'

But the text speaks of the judgment of God, not only as superseding the judgment of the world, but even as reversing our own judgment of ourselves in certain cases. And here a person may say, 'But how am I to know the judgment of God except through my own conscience? and if I set aside conscience, where shall I find another witness of the divine law? Can I be myself and not myself at the same time?' And yet something of this kind seems to be the meaning of the text. Notwithstanding this logical paradox, I will now endeavour to show that these comfortable words of the writer of this epistle are not devoid of meaning.

He is speaking of those who love God, who draw near to the light, who are truly desirous of following the example of Christ. And we may be allowed to expand and translate his words a little, so as to comprehend all those who acknowledge a principle of duty and a law of right, who are willing to sacrifice themselves for others or to bear a cross for the sake of the truth. Nevertheless, he who answers to either of these descriptions may find himself the

victim of sorrow and sadness; he may be full of doubts and scruples, waging an unequal warfare against his own passions; the creature of circumstances which are too much for him. He may be exacting of himself duties which in his calmer moments he knows to be beyond his strength; or he may be fancying duties which God does not require of him; or he may be weary of the monotony and unprofitableness of life, seeking vainly for something better and not knowing how to attain it. He cannot see himself as he truly is, or as he will appear to himself when a few more years have passed over his head, and his natural frame of mind has returned to him. Or he may have peculiar difficulties of character in himself or in others which disturb the harmony of his life, and lead him to pass a mistaken judgment on his own actions. Some element of necessity may enter into his being or constitution. He may be troubled with moods of mind and gloomy thoughts which cannot at once be dispelled. Or, to take one other instance, the natural growth of religious opinions may have an undue effect upon him; his heart may contradict his head; at times the very substance of his faith may be taken from him. And yet he knows that he would not willingly disobey the will of God or forsake the path of duty; he is not less but more particular in his practice than formerly; but he has no comfort or certainty in religion.

These are the cases in which the voice of God is heard within whispering peace and inviting the soul to pass from herself to Him; from her own narrow fancies and scruples to His comprehensive love of all His creatures; from her own blurred and confused sight to His heavenly clearness; from her own wayward and uncertain impulses to His perfect calm. He cannot be served by scruples of conscience. He says to us, 'My son, give Me thy heart'; when the heart has been given, He is not over-exacting about this or that particular. St. Paul goes so far even as to say that such scruples have the nature of sin. He cannot be served by fear, for perfect love casteth out fear; His justice is not terrifying to us—on that rather we repose, because He knows all things. He cannot be served by doubts; there are certainties beyond them; and although it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we know that He who has watched over us in life will not be wanting to us at the gates of death. Moods of mind are not the true service of God; the dark condemnation of ourselves cannot make us worse in His sight than we really are, or better; the shadows of His wrath are not passing over us because our minds are clouded. He who made us knows that these things may not be the true movements of our being, but the accidents of our physical constitution. Wounded affections, conflicts with those whom we love, may disorder our lives; then again He is heard promising to be a father to us and a mother too, who

gives His beloved rest. He to whom we say, 'I am weak and unequal to these trials,' says to us in return, 'My strength is perfected in weakness.' He to whom the spirit of man offers up the cry, 'Who is he, Lord, that I should believe in him?' or, 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,' sends for answer, 'Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.'

Thus at every turn of life we may go out of ourselves to rest in God. He is the true centre of all human things, in whom all the varieties of human character meet and are satisfied, in whom only the greater passions of mankind, seeking in vain for something which they know not, can safely find their object; from whom, too, men's passing emotions receive their true law—all of them to be diffused again over our fellow-men, like rain falling upon the earth. For whatever we give to God He gives back again to us in another form, refined, hallowed, strengthened. The sorrow which would have been fruitless if suffered to run wild, when consecrated to Him may teach us truths of which we had not previously thought, penetrating and sanctifying our lives. The trials of mind through which we pass may develop powers and interests in us of which we never dreamed; regarded as a part of the order of the world, which He has appointed that they may discipline and strengthen us.

The great crises of life especially may become the links which bind us to something beyond this world.

The thought of God and of eternity is the resting-place in which we are left alone when our health fails, when our life draws to a close. Clouds which at times overshadow our path extend but a little way from the earth which is our habitation ; the love and light which are beyond are without limit.

XVIII

¹HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD.

ACTS x. 38.

IT is sometimes thought that the Christian religion is surrounded by greater difficulties than formerly. There are those who would bid us watch the gradual disappearance of it : who ask how much will remain a hundred years hence, when the Positive age has succeeded to the Metaphysical as the Metaphysical is supposed to have already taken the place of the teaching of Christ. Such wide generalizations have very little truth in them, but they often exercise a great influence over the minds of men. There are others again who have written accounts of their own lives and have narrated the phases of their faith ; how, beginning with the belief in a verbal inspiration, they have dropped one article of their creed after another until only a few fundamental truths remained to them : or they may have gone even further. And yet all the time their lives have been in the right ; they have been making one long effort to serve God and the truth. Such a book has been written by a venerable person, formerly a fellow of this College,

¹ Preached at Balliol, October, 1888.

who began life as an evangelical Christian, and ended a freethinker; and yet in both stages of his belief the true disciple of Christ may equally be discerned. For there is no one who is a true lover of man who is not also beloved of God. The author of *The Phases of Faith* was one who might be described as accidentally a freethinker, but in reality a follower of Christ; or, in the deeper and also more familiar language of the Gospel, as one 'who was not far from the kingdom of heaven.' The first impression given by the book is, How good and simple this man was! and yet how easily affected by all the influences of the age in which he lived! And there have been others like him both in this and the last generation—freethinkers who have in their nature the humility and self-devotion of a Catholic saint—Catholics who could never lose the sincere love of every form of truth. It is a curious reflection also that such persons may sometimes have crossed each other in the path of life, and by some reaction of nature have either of them ended where the other began.

These are some of the paradoxes of an age of transition, such as the last half century, which has had such curious effects on the relation of things secular and spiritual, on the characters and opinions of men. The next generation too will be put upon its trial; but the trial will be of a different kind. Many questions which greatly affected us will to them be

familiar or obsolete. They will no longer be inquiring into the origin or date of the books of Scripture, or discussing the evidence of miracles, or seeking to reconcile science and religion or morality and theology. Critical and historical questions will have been settled with that degree of relative certainty which is attainable in such subjects. The relation of religion to science will have solved itself, and will be no longer a matter of dispute. An historical age will have succeeded to a controversial one. Religious life will no longer be liable to be upset by small earthquakes, but will have a wider and deeper foundation. Good men of all parties will more and more see that so far as they had the spirit of God at all, they meant the same thing far more than they supposed. They will see that other religions and other teachers of religion had in them also the spirit of Christ; and that these anticipations of the truth, instead of impairing the force of Christianity, strengthen and extend it; as Christ also Himself seems to intimate when He says 'Many shall come from the East and from the West'; or again, 'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.' They will recognize that what has been sometimes regarded as the triumph of antichrist is only the natural consequence of criticism and science, which, like the rising of the tide, can by no human efforts be driven back.

The difficulties of which I have been speaking are not exactly made by us, but they are made by the

history of the world ; and we perhaps are in a measure to blame for not keeping our minds above them, for repining against the age in which we live, for not doing our duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call us. It is in religion as it is in politics : we complain of latitudinarianism or of the spread of democracy, but there is no one who would like to return to the narrownesses or the oppression or the intolerance of fifty or a hundred years ago. And in either case we may reasonably suppose that the good will increase and the evil diminish as time goes on ; we shall grow more accustomed to the new order of things, and shall begin to understand better the minds and wants of our fellow-men. Whenever the Christian life becomes a reality, disputes about words will be more transparent : many of the envious barriers which divide men will be removed, and they will know God more as He is. They will pass out of the valleys on to the hills, and a wider prospect will open to them. So, though with hesitation, for we can proceed only one step at a time in such speculations, we may venture to forecast some of the changes which will pass over the religious world, probably during the life-time of the majority of those present here to-day. They may, if they will begin their career not with vexed problems, but with the imitation of Christ.

And now, my brethren, I shall speak to you no more of the difficulties of religion, but of the sim-

plicity of it. The witness to it in Scripture, in history, in the human heart, is one and the same. Listen to the Old Testament: 'He hath shown thee, O man, what He requireth of thee: to do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God.' Where has the spirit of true religion ever been more truly described? Or take the words which are familiar to us, 'When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness,' in which verse, as we gather from the context, is intimated the great truth that the sins of the fathers shall not be visited upon the children. Or again: 'A highway shall there be, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but the wayfaring man shall not err in it.' Or again: 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice,' which may be called the central truth of Hebrew prophesy; 'Go ye too, and learn what that means.' Let me recall by a word or two similar passages in the New Testament. 'Blessed are the peacemakers'; 'Blessed are the pure in heart'; 'Except a man receive the kingdom of God as a little child'; 'Take no thought for the morrow'; 'Forasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these'; 'Consider the lilies of the field'; 'His father went out to meet him'; 'In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage'; 'The sabbath was made for man'; 'I came not to destroy but to fulfil.' Where, if not in these and the like words, can we ever expect to hear the voice of God speaking to us? 'Lord, to

whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' Is there any difficulty in understanding them? or does the heart and conscience of any one disapprove of them? Does not Greek philosophy, or rather all philosophy and all religion from time to time bear witness to them? There is no rational being, if he be allowed to express the same thoughts in his own phraseology, who will not assent to them. There is no reason why at any moment of our lives we should be uncertain what is the rule of duty or the will of God. Nor are we really uncertain; whatever may be the words which we employ, we all know quite well that truth is better than falsehood, purity than impurity, to love better than to hate, to please God better than to gain worldly reputation. The truth for which we are seeking is not a labyrinth without a clue, nor yet a mist in which we cannot see where we are going, but plain as the sun at midday, having the body of heaven in its clearness. It is not a mystery, but a truism which we are apt to forget and to deem commonplace, because it is so little realized in our lives. It is the light which lighteth every man, which shines daily and hourly, and accompanies us in all our ways, and is therefore scarcely remarked by us. And we see the same light under many aspects, as it mingles with the shadows and clouds of earth or is obscured by them; or as it shines in its own unclouded beauty, far away from us in the blue sky.

The real difficulty is not here, but we transfer to the reason what is really the infirmity of the will. All men to some extent, under some name or other, know the laws of God and nature, but they do not make them the laws of their own life. It is not the perplexities of the age in which we live, but the lusts of the flesh, the desire of approbation, the pride of life, childishness, vanity, egotism, self-love, which are the real hindrances to our progress in the Christian life. Most of us have been conscious of struggles within us, in which the lower has tried to get the better of the higher self. The conscience of some has gone to sleep, but may remember such struggles in the past. There are many voices sounding in the ears of men everywhere, but they do not hear with their ears or understand with their minds the words which now as of old Christ is speaking to them. They do not consider the one thing needful—how they may become better.

The simplicity of religion may be illustrated in another way, from the life and example of Christ. No one can suppose that our Lord, as He is pictured to us in the Gospels, filled men's minds with perplexity, or uttered dark sayings, or refined upon distinctions of doctrine, or insisted upon the belief in the history of the Jews as the condition of man's acceptance with God. His hard sayings were of another sort: 'Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor'; and 'Except a man be born again,

he cannot see the kingdom of God.' The love of God, the love of man, the preference of the spirit to the letter, the appeal from the worse to the better mind, from what men habitually practise to what they all know, the return to the first principles of religion, the denunciation of hypocrisy in every form, the conviction of sin and the need of forgiveness—these are the truths, not new but old, which Christ is always seeking to implant in the hearts of men. His life, which was their example, which He passed in talking with them and in sympathy with their sufferings and sins—this life might be summed up in a single phrase, 'He went about doing good.' And the image of one who went about doing good has been preserved to us not only in the record of Scripture, but in the examples of those who have followed in His footsteps from that day till now.

'He went about doing good.' So we might say in our own age of two or three who have been personally known to us, 'He or she went about doing good.' They are the living witnesses to us of His work. If we observe them we shall see that they did good because they were good—because they lived for others and not for themselves, because they had a higher standard of truth and therefore men could trust them, because their love was deeper and therefore they drew others after them. These are they of whom we read in Scripture that they bear the

image of Christ until His coming again, and of a few of them that they have borne the image of His sufferings, and to us they are the best interpreters of his life. They too have a hidden strength which is derived from communion with the Unseen; they pass their lives in the service of God, and yet only desire to be thought unprofitable servants. The honours or praises which men sometimes shower upon them are not much to their taste. Their only joy is to do the will of God and to relieve the wants of their brethren. Their only or greatest sorrow is to think of the things which, from inadvertence or necessity, they have been compelled to leave undone. Their way of life has been simple; they have not had much to do with the world; they have not had time to accumulate stores of learning. Sometimes they have seen with superhuman clearness one or two truths of which the world was especially in need. They may have been scarcely known, or not known until after their death; they may have had their trials too—failing health, declining years, the ingratitude of men—but they have endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

Divided as we are by so many centuries from the age in which Christ lived, I think that the contemplation of such lives is the best preparation which we can make for the study of the life of Christ Himself. As they are, so was He in this world. The record of the Gospels is fragmentary—we cannot exactly

reduce it to a precise order; it is only by an effort that we reproduce the customs and opinions of the Jewish world at the Christian era. Neither is it the precise words of Christ that we desire to recover so much as His spirit and character; nor can we attach any weight to the remark of a great popular writer that the geography of Palestine, or we may add the history and antiquities of Palestine, is as good as the addition of a fifth Gospel to the other four. But we want to know what Christ was like, that we too, though at a distance, may follow Him.

And of Christ we may say He went about doing good, because He was good, because He was love, because He was truth, because He knew human nature, because He judged not as man judgeth. He lived in communion with God, and therefore He 'took of the things of God and showed them to men.' As God was His father, so He was like a father or elder brother to all other men. He seems to have a heart capable of containing the sins and sorrows of all men. The stranger from Syrophenicia is no stranger to Him, at once they are united in the bonds of common humanity. Living above the world, He does not seek to live away from it; He does not hide Himself in a cell or retire into a desert, but wanders about, conversing with His fellow-men, and is present on the ordinary occasions of life. He and His little band of followers went about in the villages and entered into the houses, eating

such things as were set before them after the manner of the East. They were present at the marriage feast of Cana; they sat down to meat in the house of Levi the publican; they plucked the ears of corn on the Sabbath day. It was not the time for them to fast when the bridegroom was with them. On one long-remembered occasion the food was broiled fish and an honey-comb. They listened to Christ preaching on a mountain, in the plain, out of a boat, in the synagogue. The figures of speech which He used were derived from their daily occupations, from the country in which they lived, from the lake in which they caught fish, from the vineyards which clothed the sides of the hills. Such was their manner of life while He remained with them in Galilee. Once there had been an insurrection in that region, and the blood of the insurgents had been mingled with their sacrifices. But now the land had rest—the waters of the lake were clear and still. In that narrow district they were not likely to have heard of the wars of the Romans, of Tiberius and his favourites. They had no outlook into history. The life of Christ was a private life which stood in no relation to the events of the time.

But leaving the externals of the scene, which are only a pleasant picture, let us return once more to think of Christ as He was in Himself, meditating on the sins and sufferings of men, and seeking to reconcile them with His Father and their Father,

with His God and their God. The Son of man came to save them that were lost. He saw them wandering out of the way, in vain traditions invented by teachers of the law, in casuistical refinements which undermined the first principles of morality. The rulers of the people had lost the sense of right in an organized hypocrisy, and seem to have been divided between subservience to the Roman governors and detestation of them. And Christ sought to lead them out of this troublesome world into a kingdom of peace which was within them; to give them freedom too, but a freedom not like that for which the Galileans wildly fought; to implant in them the true law, greater than that of Moses, which controlled not only men's outward actions, but the thoughts and intents of their hearts. There had been teachers in the old times who had proclaimed the word of God to an unbelieving people—the Jewish prophets; and Christ sought to revive the memory of their words in the minds of men, disengaging them from their local or temporal meaning, and making them the vehicles of lessons never to pass away. The prophets too had spoken of a servant of God who 'should not strive nor cry, neither should his voice be heard in the streets'—'a bruised reed he shall not break, nor quench the smoking flax until he hath brought forth judgment unto victory; and in his name shall the Gentiles trust.' Such was the still small voice, first heard in Judea, with which

Christ won the kingdoms of the world. He was the opposite of kings and princes and of earthly greatness, yet in a sense also a king to those who could discern greatness truly. And as His earthly existence was a kind of paradox, so too the lessons which He taught were for the most part in contradiction to the received opinions of men. Consider how He said, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'; or, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'; or, 'Father, forgive them'; or, 'Blessed are the poor.' And there are, as we well know, words of our Lord which we hardly venture to repeat, because they are so much at variance with the practice of Christians that we, perhaps weakly, fear lest they should endanger existing institutions. He has been sometimes claimed as a socialist: and we may frankly acknowledge that He was not so far removed from Socialism as He was from many beliefs and opinions which have become prevalent in the Christian world. It could not be expected that all the lessons which He taught would be approved by His contemporaries any more than, if He were to come again upon earth, they would be approved by us now.

Yet this antagonistic side of the teaching of Christ is not the whole or the principal part of it. The greater message which He came into the world to declare was the message of love, the love of God to man. He told men that their Father who was

in heaven was more ready to hear than they were to ask; that He did not need to be told of them, although they needed to be told of Him; that the least things were the objects of His care equally with the greatest; that He never cast out any that came; only they must renounce their sins: they could not be the friends of God and hate their brethren; they could not worship God in spirit and in truth when they sought to be observed of men; they could not see God when their minds were darkened with impurity and sin. But let them once break through the hardness of heart which divided them from God, the veil of passion which hid Him from them, let them receive the word of Christ, and they too like Him would become the sons of God. They must forgive if they would be forgiven; they must do as they would be done by; they must give and it should be given to them; they must be holy, for God was holy. So in everything He sought to bring men back to that true image of humanity by which He Himself was to reconcile them with one another and with God. This is the message of Christ, not to them only but to all mankind.

So in a very fragmentary manner I have sought to sketch a few characteristic features of the life of Christ as He is depicted in the Gospel. Is such a life imitable by us? We know of course that the externals of such a life differ from our modern manners and customs, and that it would not be

natural or perhaps right for us to quit our daily pursuits and 'go about doing good.' We know also that the life of Christ is so far above us that we cannot ascend to it. We can only follow humbly and at a distance. Let us see how far any shadow or recollection of it may exist among ourselves. If anywhere, we must look for it not in extraordinary deeds or sayings, but in the daily occasions of life. Young men too have their ideals which do them good and raise their minds to think of higher things, but these ideals relate mostly to great reforms of the world or of the Church, or to the progress of education and science; they seldom touch very nearly their own life or conduct. But he who would be the follower of Christ must come home to himself: he must put away sin and evil; he must have a conscience as the noonday clear; he must think of his own mind as a temple, into which no unclean thing is permitted to enter. And when he has set his own house in order, he may find out ways of doing good to his fellow-men. He will seek to infuse into them friendliness and goodwill; he will create a good understanding among them, he will try to draw them out of themselves by sympathy and affection. If he would exercise a good influence on society, he must himself also be free from little faults, such as vanity or egotism, which so easily beset us. He will not wish to be admired of the world, but only to do the will of God. The society in which he lives will in

some very real but hardly perceptible manner be the better for his example. He who has a standard above that of ordinary men will insensibly raise them to a higher level. He will be very careful of hurting the feelings of others, and will not allow himself to feel too deeply the slights and accidents which occur in the course of life. For he must be happy himself who would make others happy. He will know that there are times of sorrow and trouble when a word of kindness or advice has a peculiar value. He will find weak natures who need to be encouraged; to stronger natures he may sometimes give a hint which will keep such a one in the right path, and determine the course of his life. [There are confidences which young men often have with one another about matters in which the word of either may have much more weight than any experience of the aged: no doubt in such positions the strictest faithfulness and reticence are required of us.] He will seek to increase his knowledge of the characters of men, that he may increase his power of doing them good. He will try to soften the differences of ranks and pursuits and opinions, knowing that all these things are but for a time: and that, although they are so important in the eye of man, in the sight of God they can hardly be thought to exist at all. He will make ties for himself with his poorer brethren, lest 'out of sight' become 'out of mind,' and he should forget who made him to differ from another. He will not refuse

to deny himself for the sake of them in some matter of pleasure or convenience, remembering that Christ also pleased not Himself. He will consider that property has its duties as well as its rights, and that to give is more blessed than to receive. He will know above all that the good which he can do for others must be measured by what he is himself; and that in youth especially there is nothing so becoming as modest stillness and humility.

So in a family, in a school or a college, notwithstanding the differences of time and circumstance which divide us from the first disciples, though here in Oxford at so great a distance, we too, according to our measure, may in a very real manner follow the example of Christ and walk in His footsteps.

XIX

'HE SAID, 'IT IS FINISHED': AND HE BOWED HIS HEAD AND GAVE UP THE GHOST.

JOHN xix. 30.

THESE words have a peculiar interest and solemnity to us because they are supposed to be the last words of Him whom we call our Lord and Master. The agony had ceased, the final hour had come, although, a short time before, Christ, like some of those who have been partakers of His sufferings, had tasted the bitterness of death, and there was a moment when the cry had been wrung from Him, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' while at another moment He poured forth the prayer, more divine than any earthquake or darkness which veiled the awful sight, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' The narrative in St. John's Gospel from which the text is taken differs in several points from the narrative of the other Gospels; and the love of truth compels us to admit that the words of Christ, and especially these last words, are differently reported by St. Luke and St. John. When we

¹ Preached at Balliol, May 14, 1882.

consider the confusion and uncertainty of the scene, we shall not wonder that some spoke of our Lord as expiring with a cry, which is the record of St. Matthew and St. Mark, while others, as in St. Luke's Gospel, reported Him to have said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit'; and others again describe Him as pouring forth His last breath in the words, 'It is finished,' which are found in the Gospel of St. John. Ingenious persons have attempted to harmonize these and similar discrepancies in the Gospels. But there is little wisdom in applying to Scripture a mode of reconciliation which we should not apply to an ordinary history. The thought of Christ which has filled the mind of the world has nothing to do with those microscopic inquiries respecting the composition of the Gospels which have so greatly exercised critics for more than a century, and had better perhaps be dropped for ever, now that we seem to know all that can be known on the subject. All the four, or rather the three, narratives of the Crucifixion (for that of St. Mark adds nothing of consequence to the remaining three) are extremely simple; and there is no trace in any of them that the Evangelists would have regarded the Lord as saying one thing with one part of His nature and another with another; or that they felt, or would have even understood, the difficulties which the after-reflections of theologians have introduced into the text of Scripture.

What our Lord meant, or what the Evangelists meant by the words of the text, or rather by the one word, 'It is finished,' we can only conceive in part. There is more contained in them than we can easily elicit from them. Christ had always spoken of Himself as having a work to do which must be finished before He went hence. According to the tradition which has been preserved in the Gospel of St. Luke He was thirty years of age at the commencement of His public ministry; and He continued to preach and teach for about three years, marked in the Gospel of St. John by the successive Jewish festivals (for the first three Gospels contain no indication of the length of His ministry). In this short time the great lesson had been taught; a new truth, a new idea, a new power had been imparted to man which the world was never afterwards to lose. He had opened the gate, He had shown men the way—to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God. He had included in His kingdom the other sheep which are not of this fold. He had been received and He had been rejected of men; He had appeared to them for a moment to be the Anointed One of whom the prophets had spoken, the Son of David, the King of Israel, and then again He had borne the image of that other Christ, beloved of God and yet seeming to be forsaken of Him. He had been deserted by the people and then by His own disciples, and the most enthusiastic of them did not

venture to acknowledge Him. The politic Sadducee would have remarked with satisfaction that 'the deceiver or troubler would be now no more heard of'; 'the sect was hardly a sect and would never revive.' And yet at that hour, when the world was closing upon Him in darkness, when the consummation seemed to be further off than ever, when His own disciples had forsaken Him and fled, it might be said with truth of the work which He came into the world to accomplish, 'It is finished.'

Of the meaning of these words to the mind of Christ Himself, or of the thoughts which were present to Him in that hour, we hardly like to raise the question. Still less should we make a near approach to the mind of Christ by assuming that He was loaded with the sufferings of all mankind; or by exaggerating the merely physical characteristics of the scene, for example, by meditating on His wounds, in which some of His followers living in ruder ages of the Christian Church have fancied that they could imitate Him; or again, by drawing pictures of the Crucifixion, which indeed has given birth to many noble works of art. But into this solemn scene we should wish to enter, not with our feelings only but with our reason, regarding the event, not as a symbol having many mystical meanings or pictorial effects, but as an historical fact. For the real point of all is that *He died for us*, and that we at this day still feel the power of the cross working in us. But when

we try to image Him as He was in this world (not to dwell on the fragmentary character of the accounts of His life which have been preserved to us in the Gospels), we feel that He was a being so different from us, so much above the ordinary motives and impulses of men, that we cannot adequately interpret either His words or His acts. We cannot conceive Him in the mind's eye in the same sense that we can conceive of Peter or Paul or John. What were His feelings at this hour? Was He thinking of the years which He had spent under the roof of His parents, when 'He was subject to them,' as the narrative tells us, in His home by the sea of Galilee, as many have had the recollection of early life rush back upon them at the time of death? Or was He thinking of her through whose soul a 'sharp sword had passed,' who with dimmed eyes was watching at a distance the cruel death of her beloved son? Or, perhaps, of the fickleness of mankind on which, now that, in the word of St. John, He was lifted up from the earth, He seemed to look down, as being out of the reach either of their enmity or favour? Such might have been the natural feelings of an ordinary good or great man in the hour when he was casting aside his life as a trifle which he hardly cared to save. But to Christ we shall do well to attribute thoughts higher and deeper still, such thoughts as we find expressed in the later chapters of St. John:—'Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do'; 'I

in them and Thou in Me, that they all may be made perfect in one'; 'And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee'; 'Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you'; 'I will send you another comforter, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, and He shall testify of Me.' And yet also, as we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew: 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, yet not My will but Thine be done.' In such a spirit, and with such thoughts passing through His soul, Christ died; and in such a spirit, as far as He is imitable by us, we pray that we may die, if it should please God to take us to Himself, not in peaceful slumber, but amid sharp and bitter pains.

There have been other great works in the world (although we do not compare them with the work of Christ) to which the words of the text might be properly applied, 'It is finished.' A great man undertakes some cause; he begins with the world against him, and ends with the world on his side; he has lived to see the principle to which his life was devoted safe and beyond dispute; he has wrestled with the surface currents and been borne on the deeper tide of human affairs; and, as he passes out of life, is conscious that he has the future with him. Such works there have been in this and other ages and countries which individuals have been allowed to complete in a single lifetime. The writing of

a history which remains to be 'an everlasting possession,' the discovery of a new scientific method, the reformation of a religion, the consolidation of an empire, the completion of a beneficent scheme of policy, the creation of a school of philosophy, the revelation of an unknown school of nature: these things have been perfected by the almost superhuman power of single men. A great inventor may live to see the face of a country changed by some mechanism or contrivance which was slumbering in his own mind thirty or forty years before. What singular thoughts must arise up in such men at the close of life? And we should like to think of them as offering up their work to God, saying, in a sense that ordinary men cannot say, 'I have finished the work which Thou hast given me to do.' And whether they put the thought into words or not, or were conscious of any such feeling in looking back upon their past years, still, if their work was disinterested, if they were not living only for gain and fame, we know that they were accepted of Him. For the Gospel does not bid us exclude any who seem in any degree to have the spirit of Christ, and least of all the great benefactors of mankind.

But these examples rise above the level of humanity, and we want to return to our daily work and life. Most of us would like to have done something before we grow old and die. If there could only be in our lives that of which we could say, 'It is finished!' Few

persons comparatively have any idea of a work which they are called into the world to do, or of any settled plan by which their work may be accomplished. Their life seems to be drifting always, with hardly any conscious effort on their parts to direct it, and they are carried by an accustomed current to the unknown shore. They think about little things—what they shall eat, what they shall drink; but to the great matter of all they hardly attend. Or they have higher aspirations at times, but they have no continuity in their purposes, and their life is a series of disappointments to themselves and to others. I propose to urge upon you in this sermon the duty of regarding life as a work; which we may represent to ourselves, if we like, under many figures of speech—as a web which we weave, or a house which we build, or a character which we fashion, or a poem which we write, or a tree which we plant but which also grows; and the blessedness of having completed that work before we pass away.

Some one will speak to us, or the thought may arise in our minds, when we are beginning to make our plan, of the shortness and uncertainty of life. That is a text upon which the preacher has often enlarged. There seems to be no time in which anything considerable can be effected. We pass from youth to middle life, and from middle life to old age, before we know where we are; and there is such a chance that we may be cut off and never finish

what we are doing. Death is standing in the way, as old mythology fancied, envious of the fair, the good, the young. There is a strange mixture of truth and error in these sort of reflections. In one sense man is the sport of the winds and the waves; but behind these are the laws of nature, and behind all is the unchanging will of God. The faith in an unchangeable God is the strength of human nature; the feeling that we are the sport of chance, even if relieved by the occasional favour or interference of Providence, is really the weakness of us. A state of the world in which we could calculate upon nothing would be a sort of chaos both in nature and in human life. Nor do we feel either as Christians or as men that there is anything very terrible in death: that seems to be a terror which, if we look at facts, is not greatly felt by men; nor is the higher purpose of the Gospel to take away the fear of death, but to introduce us to a higher life.

I would rather consider another aspect of this subject, which is quite as religious and more practical, and has not been so often dwelt upon in sermons, I mean the comparative certainty of human life. We all know that the probable duration of our lives may be easily calculated, and is the basis of various dealings between man and man. We have not so long to live at thirty as we have at twenty, or at fifty as we have at thirty. Time becomes more and more valuable to us, and we are afraid that

the night may overtake us sooner than we supposed. These may be truisms, but they are truisms which, if heartily recognized, exercise a very great influence on the formation of men's characters. The commonplace fact which we all know, viz. that we have probably at any age half as many years to live as we fall short of ninety (so they now tell us), may suggest little or nothing to some minds. But others may be aroused by such reflections to think that life has a definite period and a definite work, and will receive a new impulse to devote themselves to the good of their fellow-men and to the cause of truth. And as a man gets on in life the feeling that his time is short should quicken him in the service of God.

Every one has felt the satisfaction of having done something. To have carried through some business which we were disposed to put off, to have paid a debt, to have written a book, even to have answered a letter, may be a considerable rest and pleasure to us. There is a peace of mind to a man when he is dying in knowing that he has set his house in order and left none of the common duties of life unfulfilled. To have contrived or executed anything, or to have acquired any sort of knowledge thoroughly and exhaustively, to have brought order out of disorder, harmony out of difference, to have seen an institution grow under our hands, has been a great source of happiness to many of us. We like to have done

something, not to be always about to do something. 'Take me not away in the midst of my work' is a prayer which naturally rises to the lips at the unexpected appearance of death.

These are a few illustrations or instances which may help us to realize the thought with which I commenced, of a completed plan of life. Our plan may be a humble one—the bringing up of a family, the better management of a business, 'the trivial round, the common task.' This idea of a plan I will now endeavour to consider under two heads, showing, first, that the plan must be adapted to our characters and circumstances; secondly, that the work must be done unto the Lord and not to men.

There is a sense in which people cannot go against their own natures. They can resist the evil of them, but they cannot with any advantage try to eradicate them. They must supplement rather than extirpate their original qualities. This is what we mean by a man feeling his own deficiencies, which is a very true and expressive mode of speaking. Until he knows himself as he is in his weakness and in his strength, he will be always making mistakes, stumbling at the threshold of life, stumbling on in later life, happy if at last he can learn to see himself as others see him.

And therefore in fixing on a plan of life a man must consider his own character and limit himself by that. There are some things which he can do

easily; there are some things which he can do with an effort; there are other things which he flatters himself that he can do, but which he cannot do at all. For example, he may fancy that he will be a great speaker, when he has nothing to say; or a great poet, when he has no sense of language or of metre. The art is to start from what he is, that he may become something more; to be equal to the present while attempting things beyond. And he must not dissipate himself by trying too many things. One work, or one kind of work, is enough for the life of most men. He is not really good for much who is good at everything but his own occupation or profession.

I might illustrate the difference between the efficient and inefficient life by the case of students, whether of the younger or more advanced class. One man has no definite idea of what he is going to learn or of what he knows; he acquires by chance and indistinctly, and there are great gaps in his knowledge; with no book or subject, or part of a subject, can he be said to have a sound or accurate acquaintance; he has never grasped or realized anything; he has no exact knowledge of facts, and he has never disciplined his mind to reason about them; he is the 'dilettante' and not the real student; and there are dilettantes in life as well as in study, in business as well as among books: whereas another man has at once presented to his mind or immediately frames

an outline of what he means to learn; he divides the whole into parts, and makes every part throw light on every other part; he examines himself to see whether he has his facts really under control; he has a hold on his subject, and is able to say of this book or of that part of study that he knows and remembers and can use his knowledge. He has found principles under which facts and ideas can be arranged; he has learned the proportions of things; he has seized the main points; in his enthusiasm for knowledge he has not lost sight of clearness and accuracy and the power of expression.

And in after-life there is the same kind of difference between the false and the real student, and between the finished and the unfinished work. Two men appear to start with equal abilities and attainments, and one of them does so much in a short time and another does so little in a long time. The great promise of youth is constantly in painful contrast with the slender performance of later years. Standing upon the brink of the grave, there are many who must acknowledge that after all their life has been a failure. Many reasons might be given for these disappointments: the narrowness of mind, which is incapable of a free or fair study of any department of knowledge; the weakness of character, which flourishes in a hothouse, but is killed in the open air and shrinks from the blasts of the world; the want of a noble aim, which raises men above

envy or jealousy or personality or party, upon which so much of the strength of life seems to be wasted. Then, again, there are mistakes that men make in a life of study as in other things. They go on reading and never writing, until their acquisitions become out of all proportion to their power of using them. Or they never see the true point of things, and never form a considered opinion about them. Or their taste may be so fastidious, or their love of minutiae so great, that no considerable work can ever be executed on the scale or with the perfection which they propose. Most of us who have arrived at middle life have had many dreams in the days of our youth, of the books which we would read, of the languages which we would learn, of the studies which we would pursue. Such dreams are always being renewed in the present generation as in the last; but, perhaps, they are rarely fulfilled. And if there is any one here present who entertains these sort of aspirations, I would not discourage him, but merely remind him that more valuable and more difficult of attainment far than this many-sided cultivation is the force of character which carries any single work to an end.

But few of us are students, and there are works of the most different kind which have to be performed, often in silence, by women as well as men, by the old as well as by the young, by the uneducated as well as by the educated. There is the care of a school,

a parish, a college, of a household and of the servants, of a house of business and the persons employed, in which such great results may be produced by a firm will and intelligent purpose extending over many years. Besides the engagements of society, besides the blessings of family life, let us make some other interest, if we can, which may bind our days together with a golden thread, and survive the changes which the lapse of years is always making in every house. To such works we should give not only the chance thoughts or moments of our lives, not only the kindly feelings which naturally arise in the minds of amiable persons towards those around them, but we should look forward a little and *scheme*, if you will, for the good of others, and not merely for our own narrow or selfish purposes. So much may be accomplished, as in nature, as in art, even by slender powers, when we make time the lever with which we work. Then again there may be works of the most private sort—trusts of duty and affection which are left to us, the reconciliation of the divisions of a family, the payment of debts, the support of others, the care of those who cannot take care of themselves. It brings a man great peace at the last to have fulfilled all these trusts, not to have the words ‘too late’ ringing in his ears. There are many lifelong works of this kind among the poor. Many of us must have known of servants who have devoted themselves to the bringing up of a family, the very type of good sense and high

principle in a limited sphere, faithful in good or evil fortune, the pillar, the example of the house in which they lived. They too have finished the work which was given them to do; they have 'gone home and taken their wages.' And we sometimes wish that we in our sphere of life could offer up to God anything as good as that faithful service.

Secondly and lastly, we may think of this work of whatever kind as the work of God upon earth, which is carried on independently of us, and in which we are allowed to bear a part. It wonderfully clears a man's head and simplifies his life when he has learned to rest not on himself but on God, when he sees his daily life and his daily work with a kind of intensity in the light of God's presence. He is not divided between this world and another, or trying to make the best of both. He has one single question which he puts to himself, one aim which he is seeking to fulfil—the will of God. He wants to know what is true or right in the sight of God. He does not care about the compliments of friends or the applause of the world, the breath of popular air or favour. He desires to work, not for the sake of any of these things, but for the sake of the work only. He wants to be rid of self in all its many deceitful, ever-recurring forms, that he may be united to God and the truth.

This is the ideal which the Apostle holds before us when he speaks of 'offering up his work to God,'

of 'presenting the body a living sacrifice,' of 'dying that we may live,' and in many similar forms of expression. This is the life of Christ, which we would imitate if we could, and do seek partially to imitate, as far as our wayward fancies can be detained by the image of a divine love. Like Christ we have a work to do, which we cannot transfer to Him, but in which the thought of Him, the great example of mankind, may be always present with us. The power of that example has not passed from the earth. And, perhaps, that very want of confidence in the letter of Scripture of which I was speaking at the beginning of this sermon, to which criticism and comparison of documents have given rise, and which by some persons is regarded as the destruction of the Christian faith, may be really the means by which we attain to a higher comprehension of the whole, passing from words to things, from the sayings of Christ to the life of Christ, from the life of Christ while He was upon earth to the life of Christ dwelling in the heart of men, from Christianity as a sect to 'My kingdom is not of this world.'

Some one will perhaps think that this sort of language or any language of Scripture is too mystical for the daylight of the nineteenth century. He has never had the feelings described, and would be unreal in pretending to have them. But still, if he has any nobility of nature, he will not deny that to be disinterested is better than to be interested, to live above

the world is better than to live in the world, to rest in the truth better than to be the servant of the fancies and prejudices of men. He will not deny that his duty is to make the most of life in the highest sense. He may even carry his idea of living for others, by some called 'altruism,' to an extent which is hardly realized in the Christianity of the present day. To him we have only to say that, although divided from him in name, we desire to be one with him in heart, believing that as there are nominal Christians in the world who say that they are and are not, so there are unconscious Christians in the world who say that they are not and yet are. And we pray for him and for ourselves that 'he and we may not have lived in vain.'

And some one else will perhaps make a reflection of another kind on the manner in which the words of the text have been considered. He will say that there must be some broken lives as well, which, owing to accident or illness or early death, could never be framed into any perfect or consistent whole. There have been men of genius cut off before their day, statesmen having the promise of a great future who have been taken from the midst of their labours, poets, and others in whose memory poets have sung, who, according to the ordinary term of human life, would have been among us still. And there is hardly any family in which the simple yet touching question is not sometimes asked, 'What would he

or she have been if they had been living now?' Or in which the last words of some young person are not remembered: 'Children, love one another'; or, 'Forgive me for any unkindness which has pained you.'

Yes, we acknowledge that there are broken lives, pieces of lives which have begun in this world to be completed, as we believe, in another state of being. And some of them have been like fragments of ancient art which we prize not for their completeness but for their quality, and because they seem to give us a type of something which we can hardly see anywhere upon earth. Of such lives we must judge, not by what the person said or wrote or did in the short span of human existence, but by what they were: if they exercised some peculiar influence on society and on friends, if they had some rare grace of humility, or simplicity, or resignation, or love of truth, or self-devotion, which was not to be met with in others. God does not measure men's lives only by the amount of work which is accomplished in them. He who gave the power to work may also withhold the power. And some of these broken lives may have a value in His sight which no bustle or activity of ordinary goodness could have attained. There have been persons confined to a bed of sickness, blind, palsied, tormented with pain and want, who yet may be said to have led an almost perfect life. Such persons

afford examples to us, not indeed of a work carried out to the end (for their circumstances did not admit of this), but of a work, whether finished or unfinished, which at any moment is acceptable to God. And we desire to learn of them, and to have an end like theirs when the work of active life is over and we sit patiently waiting for the will of God.



THE MASTER'S MESSAGE TO THE COLLEGE IN HIS
ILLNESS, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18TH, 1891.

The Master of the College, being unable, through illness, to preach at the commencement of Term, the following Address, taken down from his dictation, was read by his desire at the Afternoon Service.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

As it is likely that I may not be able to speak to you at the beginning of Term, I wish to say a few words which may be read to you.

I have done little for you in comparison with what I could have wished, and I have many and serious faults. My faults I must lay before God—to you I have only a few plain truths to tell, perhaps for the last time, who can say? and from the heart.

It has always grieved me to see how many lives have been wasted at Oxford, and how much more might have been accomplished by us all. The waste is caused by want of energy and industry, and by weakness of character, and by ignorance of the world. Most of us have been wanting in the clear desire and wish to serve God and our fellow-men. At the critical times of life we have not done justice to ourselves. We have not tried enough to see ourselves as we are, or to know the world as it truly is. We have drifted with Society, instead of forming independent principles of our own. We have thought too much of ourselves, and of what is being said about us. We have cared more for the opinion of others than for the truth. We have not loved others

in all classes of society as Thou, O Lord, hast loved us. We have not thanked Thee sufficiently for the treasures of knowledge, and for the opportunities of doing good which Thou hast given us in this latter day. We have worried ourselves too much about the religious gossip of the age, and have not considered enough the fixed forms of truth. We have been indolent, and have made many excuses for falling short in Thy work.

And now, O Lord, in these difficult times, when there is a seeming opposition of knowledge and faith, and an accumulation of facts beyond the power of the human mind to conceive; and good men of all religions, more and more, meet in Thee; and the strife between classes in society, and between good and evil in our own souls, is not less than of old; and the love of pleasure and the desires of the flesh are always coming in between us and Thee; and we cannot rise above these things to see the light of Heaven, but are tossed upon a sea of troubles; we pray Thee be our guide, and strength, and light, that, looking up to Thee always, we may behold the rock on which we stand, and be confident in the word which Thou hast spoken.

My dear friends, I say these few words to you, not as one who is without hope of recovery, but as one who, wishing for your good at all times, ventures to speak to you in different moods, when circumstances become changed, either with you or with him.

October 8th, 1891.

WORKS BY THE LATE
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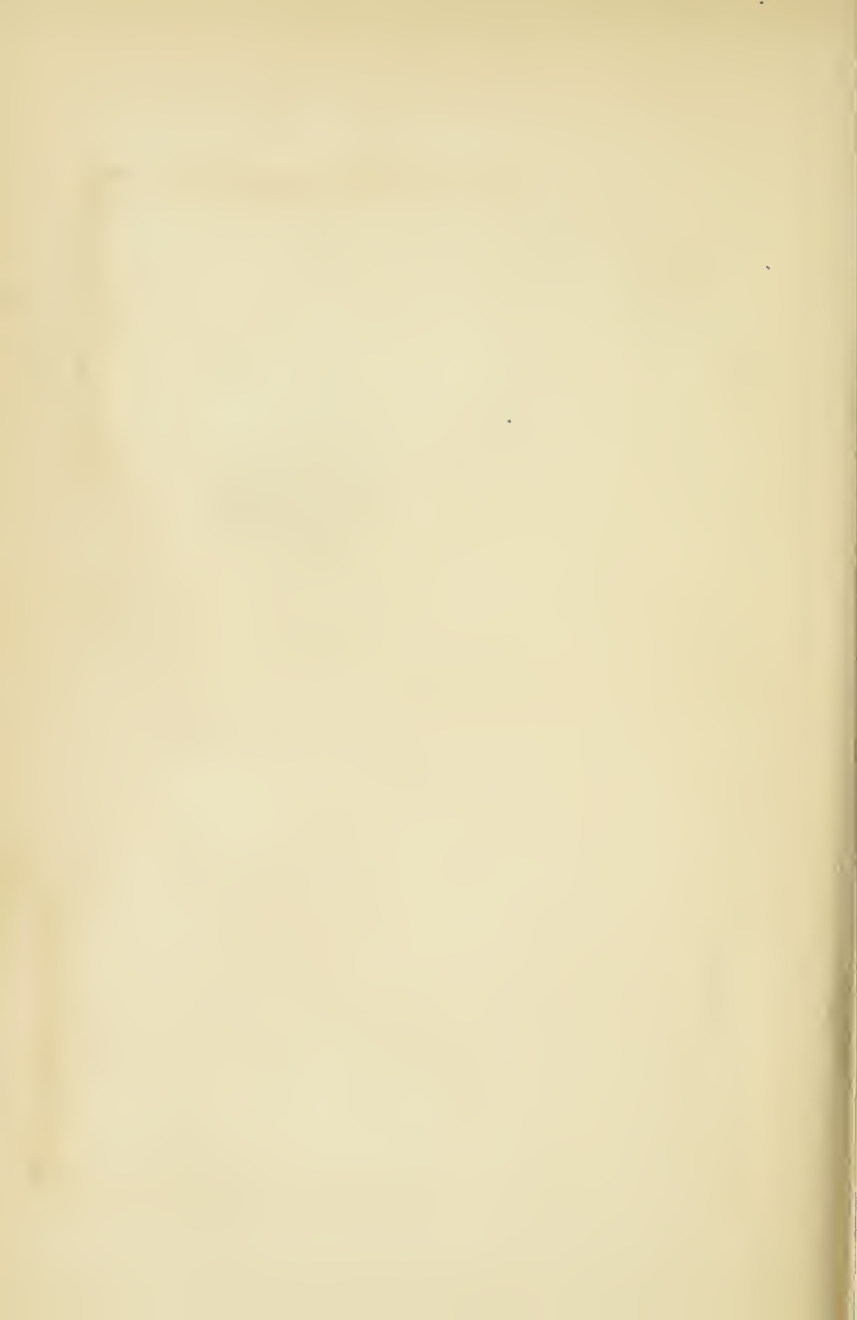
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